

Feeding displays to end for fat sharks

Giri Scout cookie sales at U.S. missions banned

Don't say it with flowers

Palestinians lodge protest against order to close Jerusalem offices

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — The Palestinians filed a complaint with Israeli authorities on Monday against an order to close three Arab east Jerusalem offices allegedly linked to the Palestinian National Authority. "I met with officials from the [Israeli] internal security ministry and showed them documents supporting our case," said Jawad Bulos, an attorney representing the three offices. "They told me they were going to give me an answer. As they haven't yet done so, they cannot act legally and while we wait, the offices are remaining open," he told AFP. Jerusalem police on Sunday delivered warnings to the local bureau of the official Palestinian news agency, Wafa, the office of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's advisor for Christian affairs, Ibrahim Qandalaft, and a centre run by a prisoners' support group.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية. الراي

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Lockerbie bombing suspects arrive for trial in the Netherlands

THE HAGUE (AFP) — Two Libyans charged with the 1988 Lockerbie airliner bombing arrived in the Netherlands from Tripoli on Monday for an unprecedented trial, ending years of tense diplomatic wrangling. British officials hailed the handover of the two Libyans as "a historic moment" and seven-year-old United Nations sanctions against Libya were suspended after U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan informed the Security Council of the suspects' arrival.

In a ceremony at Tripoli airport, former Libyan intelligence agents Abdul Basset Ali Megrahi, 47, and Al Amin Khalifa Fhimah, 43, waved good-bye and flashed "V" for victory.

"We hope to see you again as soon as possible because we are convinced of our innocence," said the suspects on Libyan state television.

"We are going of our own free will and without pressure to face the court to ensure that the truth is known," they each said.

The two landed at Valkenburg military airport north of The Hague in the company of U.N. envoy Hans Corell, and now face trial in a special Scottish court in the Netherlands. Tripoli said its decision to handover the suspects, who are accused of bombing Pan Am Flight 103 which exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland in December 1988 killing all 259 on board and 11 on the ground, was "based on the two suspect's belief that they are going of their own free will in order to prove their innocence."

British Prime Minister Tony Blair said the handover "shows that no matter how long after

an appalling terrorist incident like that, people will in the end be brought to justice, there will be a trial."

British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook said it was a "historic moment" which "brings to an end a 10-year diplomatic stalemate and it justifies the initiative that we launched last year for a trial in a third country."

U.S. President Bill Clinton said "the road to justice has begun."

Annan said he was relieved and gratified at the event and added: "I look forward to the resumption of Libya's normal relations with the rest of the international community."

Cook added: "We will be talking to the U.N. tomorrow about sanctions being suspended and if after 90 days the U.N. secretary general considers that Libya has met all the requirements then of course they will move towards lifting them on a permanent basis."

Jane Swire, whose daughter was killed in the bombing, said: "We are very, very relieved that it has gone this far. It is a beginning. Obviously nothing can bring back the precious people that we have lost and that still hurts."

Scottish and U.S. courts in 1991 charged the two Libyans with the bombing, but Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Qaddafi refused to hand them over for trial until a deal was struck with Washington and London last August to try them in a Scottish court in the Netherlands.

It took further months of mediation by Saudi Arabia and South Africa to clinch the agreement.

(Continued on page 2)



Libyan bombing suspect Abdul Basset Megrahi (third right in long coat) arrives at Valkenburg airport on Monday. Libya handed over the two suspects in the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland, to the United Nations for trial in the Netherlands before a Scottish court (Reuters photo)

King tours Saudi naval base, Jeddah Islamic port

Agencies

HIS MAJESTY King Abdullah on Monday inspected the King Faisal naval base on the western coast of Saudi Arabia and was briefed on its activities and duties.

King Abdullah, currently on a three-day visit to Saudi Arabia, toured the naval base's command and control unit and boarded a Saudi vessel, where he was briefed by its commander about its duties.

King Abdullah visited a hangar for naval base air force planes and was briefed on the planes' duty in support of the naval units.

The naval commander presented the King with the fleet's shield and hosted a lunch in honour of the King and the Jordanian delegation.

Later, King Abdullah visited Jeddah's "Islamic port," considered the largest in the region. He was met by Prince Abdul Aziz Al Mane, president of the port corporation, who accompanied him on a tour of the port and briefed him on its recent development.

The port handles 18 million tonnes of goods per year.

King Abdullah and the Jordanian delegation also toured a sugar processing plant with an annual output of 500,000 tonnes and was briefed on its development.

The King's tour followed his meeting Sunday night with Saudi King Fahd Ben Abdul Aziz, with whom he reviewed Jordanian-Saudi relations and the peace process.

(Continued on page 2)

Israel closes Gaza commercial crossing again

KARNI (AFP) — Israel again closed the Karni commercial crossing between the Gaza Strip and Israel on Monday as part of a long-running dispute over transit fees with Palestinians, a Palestinian official said. Salim Abu Safieh, the Palestinian official in charge of security at the crossing point, told AFP that the Israeli authorities had stopped vehicles crossing after Palestinians again protested at a tripling of fees. "We are surprised that Israel has again insisted on this increase without first consulting us," he said. Israel closed Karni last month after Palestinians refused to agree to the new tariff structure but later reopened the crossing after a two-day stand-off. According to Abu Safieh, Israel wants to increase the crossing fee on each truck from 200 shekels (\$50) to 600 shekels (\$150).

King due to hold talks in Oman, UAE next week

By Caroline Faraj

AMMAN — His Majesty King Abdullah is due to continue his Arab tour by visiting Oman on Saturday and the United Arab Emirates on Sunday for talks with the two countries' leaders, an official source said on Monday.

"His Majesty will exchange views with both Sultan Qaboos of Oman and Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan of the UAE on issues of mutual concern and discuss ways to strengthen bilateral relations in all fields," the official told the Jordan Times on condition of anonymity.

"Economic relations will top the Jordanian agenda in the talks," said the source.

"King Abdullah enjoyed very close and strong relations with the young generation in the Gulf states long before King Hussein's decision to name him as his Crown Prince on Jan. 24," said the official.

Following the death of King Hussein on Feb. 7, several countries, including the Gulf states, said they were ready to help the Kingdom meet upcoming challenges.

"We are hopeful that the outcome of the King's present successful trip to Saudi Arabia will reflect positively on promoting economic ties with both the governments and the private sectors in the Gulf states," added the source.

King Abdullah, who arrived in Saudi Arabia on Sunday, said his trip was "part of the permanent consultations" between the two countries, and its purpose was to thank the Saudis

for their support "during difficult circumstances."

Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates have always maintained good relations with Amman.

"We hope the outcome of the King's tour will open new markets to Jordanian manpower and products and encourage private investors to start projects in the tourism and development fields in the Kingdom," said another official source.

Although the Gulf states are facing economic problems stemming from the drop in crude oil prices, some of them offered financial support to the Kingdom.

Last month, the United Arab Emirates made a \$150 million long-term deposit in the Central Bank of Jordan to bolster the Kingdom's foreign currency reserves.

The Arab Monetary Fund also made a similar deposit of \$100 million. Saudi Arabia has a major say in the fund's investment decisions.

Last month, Qatari Emir Sheikh Hamad Ben Khalifa Al Thani visited Amman for talks with King Abdullah on bilateral issues and promoting investments in the Kingdom.

Later this month, King Abdullah is scheduled to visit several other Arab states, including Syria, Egypt, Morocco and Kuwait.

"The King's visit to Syria and Egypt is expected to take place in the second half of this month," said the official.

King Abdullah is also scheduled to meet with U.S. President Bill Clinton in Washington in mid-May.

Arab Christians, Muslims clash in Nazareth for second day

NAZARETH (AFP) — Clashes between Arab Christians and Muslims erupted in the northern Israeli town of Nazareth for the second day running on Monday over city proposals to build a square on the site of a planned mosque.

The fighting broke out after Muslims attempted to close down a number of Christian shops to enforce a general strike order called by the Islamic Movement, a local Islamic political

party, to protest the plan. Israeli police reported nobody had been wounded in the fighting while the Islamic Movement said it would hold a demonstration in the city later Monday.

On Sunday 27 people were wounded, including four police officers, and 11 people were arrested in Nazareth, the leading Arab Israeli city with some 60,000 residents. Dozens of cars were

damaged in the battles, which Nazareth residents told AFP started when a bunch of Christians attacked a group of Muslims after midnight mass.

Relations between Muslim and Christian factions have been tense since local Muslims began pushing for a massive new mosque to be built near the Church of the Annunciation.

Nazareth's Christian mayor, Ramiz Jeraisi, wants to create a square in

a city which faces heavy congestion, caused in part by the daily visits of thousands of Christian pilgrims to the town, where Jesus Christ spent his childhood according to Christian tradition.

The dispute over the site has sparked a stabbing, beatings, and a campaign of hate mail.

Christians make up about six per cent of the Israeli Arab population.

Second Iraqi oil station destroyed as U.S.-British attacks intensify

BAGHDAD (AFP) — U.S. and British warplanes destroyed an Iraqi oil pipeline control station in the south of the country in the second such attack in three days, an oil ministry spokesman said on Monday. The attack on the station in the southern Misan province took place Sunday, but it was not clear whether it had halted the flow of crude from the Buzurgan oil fields to the Mina Al Bakr terminal on the Gulf.

The destruction of another oil monitoring station along the same pipeline on Friday failed to stop the flow.

On Sunday, the U.S. military said allied warplanes attacked Iraqi surface-to-air missile and communications sites in response to Iraqi aircraft violations of the southern "no-fly" zone.

A military spokesman in Baghdad said one Iraqi was

wounded and a house destroyed in the U.S. and British air raids.

The oil ministry spokesman accused the United States and Britain of wanting to destroy Iraq's oil infrastructure in a bid to limit the sanctions-hit state's revenues under the U.N. oil-for-food programme.

Allied aircraft resumed their strikes in the exclusion zones in northern and southern Iraq on Friday after a two-week lull.

Ruling Baath Party official Abdul Ghani Abdul Ghafur said on Monday that Iraq would continue to challenge the no-fly zones and would "continue to count on the sons of the Arab Nation in our fight against the aggressors."

The southern zone was established in August 1992 in an attempt to prevent

attacks on the Shiite Muslim population, while a northern zone was set up in April 1991 to protect the Kurdish population.

Iraq does not recognise the legitimacy of the no-fly zones, which were not established by specific U.N. resolutions, and has vowed to oppose them.

Meanwhile, Baghdad said on Monday the United States would fail in Yugoslavia just as it has in Iraq.

"The United States is trying to compensate for its failure in Iraq with a victory in Europe, and has allowed itself to be dragged into an aggression with NATO against the Yugoslav people," the Al Jumhuriya daily said.

The government newspaper said Washington was inventing unjustifiable pretexts for the Yugoslavian

operations, including defending the Kosovo Muslims while it was "killing" Iraqi and Palestinian Muslims.

The official Al Qadisiya newspaper said the NATO strikes on Yugoslavia's oil refineries and residential zones were aimed at destroying the country's economic infrastructure, just as U.S.-British strikes had in Iraq.

"The question now is: what will happen after the failure of the nine-year-old aggression against Iraq and the new aggression against Yugoslavia? The answer is that it will lead nowhere," the newspaper said.

Baghdad was among the first to condemn the NATO strikes after U.S.-led warplanes carried out a four-day air campaign against Iraq in mid-December.



Ethnic Albanians from Kosovo on Monday watch a French army helicopter carrying humanitarian aid land near the main Albanian border post of Morina, where some 226,000 refugees have arrived. Aid operations to the refugees went into full swing on Sunday (AFP photo)

NATO targets Serb troops as weather clears Rugova renews call for end to bombing

Agencies

SERB SOLDIERS and police in Kosovo became the prime target for air raids Monday as NATO took advantage of an improvement in the weather to unleash its full power to hit ground forces.

Air strikes will continue on Yugoslav military facilities and logistical targets such as fuel depots, NATO military spokesman British Air Commodore David Wilby told a press briefing here.

But he added: "We will focus our attention on fielded forces in Kosovo."

Up to now, the estimated

40,000 Yugoslav army troops and Serb paramilitary police and their hundreds of tanks have been spared the brunt of NATO's strikes because of low-lying cloud 3,000 to 15,000 metres above Yugoslavia.

Allied pilots who flew under that ceiling in an attempt to get visual contact of troop and tank targets would be easy targets for surface-to-air missiles which, one NATO diplomat said, "saturate" the region.

But overnight, that cloud cover lifted, allowing NATO to stage its busiest attack operation after 12 days of air strikes, according to an alliance official. Belgrade was struck for the

third night running, with the Yugoslav air defence headquarters getting blasted.

All allied planes returned safely despite "significant" anti-aircraft fire and missiles, NATO said.

Twenty-seven targets were hit, including bridges, fuel depots, airports, ammunition dumps, several MIG warplanes on the ground and vehicles, officials said.

Serb media said at least two people were killed and 11 were injured.

In Kosovo's capital Pristina, one of the politicians who signed the peace accord for the Kosovo Albanians, Ibrahim

Rugova, called on NATO to halt the bombings.

At the same time he urged Belgrade to cooperate with the international community.

"There should be an end to the situation in Kosovo, the bombing should be stopped and monitoring put in," Rugova said in French, after meeting Russia's Ambassador to Belgrade Yuri Kotov.

"I hope this will be discussed on the international level. This is not a question just for me. I am here without my people," he stressed.

(Continued on page 2)

Egyptian president hails ties with China

BEIJING (AFP) — Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak held talks with his Chinese counterpart Jiang Zemin here Monday with both leaders praising the strong ties between their two countries, state media reported.

Mubarak is on a five-day visit, his first since April 1994. Egypt launched diplomatic relations with China in 1956, the first Arab country to do so.

Mubarak was given a red-carpet welcome and then inspected a Chinese guard of honour inside the imposing Great Hall of People with Jiang.

Jiang hailed their discus-

sion as "very successful" saying they had talked at length on bilateral ties and the Middle East peace process, the official Xinhua news agency said.

The two presidents signed a joint communiqué on establishing strategic cooperative relations with Mubarak saying "the prospect of such cooperation is promising."

"We have talked about Mideast and Kosovo issues. We agreed that regional or global disputes should be settled by peaceful means," he added.

Mubarak also met Premier Zhu Rongji who said: "China and Egypt can learn

from each other, especially in economic reform."

"Each side can use the other's experience as a reference point," he said.

"Although China and Egypt are geographically far away from each other, China pays attention to the social and economic development of this Middle East country," Zhu added.

He praised Mubarak for his leadership of Egypt saying he had steered the country through the Asian economic crisis maintaining stability and economic development. "This is a marvellous development," Zhu said.

Zhu said he would

encourage Chinese investment in Egypt, and that China was willing to work with Egypt to do a good job on the cooperative projects in the Suez economic development zone.

Mubarak, who is on his seventh visit to China, is to give a speech to students at Beijing University on Tuesday and meet other senior Chinese officials and business leaders.

He is accompanied by Egyptian Prime Minister Kamal Ahmad Al Ganzuri and Foreign Minister Amr Musa on his three-nation tour which will also take him to Japan and South Korea.

"China is a great country and has a key role to play not only in Asia but also in Africa and other parts of the world in the light of its permanent membership in the [U.N.] Security Council," Musa said before leaving Cairo.

"Egypt believes that China has a positive role to play in shaping up and developing the new world order," Musa said.

Trade between Egypt and the trioka currently stands at \$5 billion according to the latest available figures and heavily favours Asia, said Abdul Moneim Seidi, president of the Egyptian federation of industries.

King tours naval base

(Continued from page 1)

The two leaders stressed the need to give momentum to efforts aimed at achieving comprehensive peace and voiced their countries' absolute support for the Palestinian people and their struggle to establish an independent state on their national soil.

Meanwhile, King Abdullah said on Monday that Jordan's ties with neighbouring Syria are improving.

"Relations with our brothers in Syria and Kuwait are good and are developing for the better," the King told Saudi Arabia's Okaz daily on the second day of a three-day visit to the kingdom.

"We are in permanent contact with them to exchange points of view and we focus on questions of common interest," King Abdullah said.

Also on Monday, Prime Minister Abdul-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh, Royal Court Chief Abdul Karim Kabariti and Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khatib met with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al Faisal for talks on further consolidating cooperation among the private and public sectors of the two countries, particularly in trade and economic fields.

Rawabdeh expressed Jordan's appreciation of Saudi Arabia's supportive stand for the Kingdom, while Prince Saud stressed his country's determination to back Jordan's development efforts.

The two sides also discussed a number of issues of concern to both countries.

Rawabdeh also met Monday with Saudi Interior Minister Nayef Ben Abdul Aziz to discuss the issue of employment of Jordanian workers in Saudi Arabia. The Saudi minister said his country welcomes Jordanian workers and noted that there has been a sharp increase in the number of Jordanian workers employed in Saudi Arabia over the past few years.

Lebanese Druze leader defends former PM over corruption case

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanese Druze leader Walid Jumblatt sprang to the defence on Monday of former prime minister Rafik Hariri who faces possible prosecution on charges of embezzlement.

"There is no independent justice system... Everyone has to defend his own dignity, since the state only humiliates people and the symbols of the nation," Jumblatt told the official NNA news agency.

The government said last week that Hariri and a number of other former ministers could face charges over "irregularities" in budget spending after an independent auditing commission issued a critical report on his administration.

"Who is going to apologise to Rafik Hariri now that the auditing commission has turned itself into a tribunal designed to damage people's dignity?" said

Jumblatt, who himself served as minister for displaced persons in the Hariri government which was replaced at the end of last year.

The agency carried an official commentary on Jumblatt's remarks which said "neither he nor anyone else can put themselves above justice."

"The state has to apologise if it makes a mistake, but it cannot apologise to a criminal or a thief who

thinks he is stronger than the state," it said.

The auditing commission found that around \$600 million had been embezzled from the municipalities' budget.

Jumblatt, the leader of the Progressive Socialist Party, has been consistently critical of the new President Emile Lahoud, and the government of Salim Hoss which came to power in December.



VICTIM OF ISRAELI SHELLING: Seven-year-old Lebanese Fatmeh Ayoub rests in her bed at the Nabatiyeh government hospital on Monday. Fatmeh was injured along with nine other children in Sunday's Israeli shelling on south Lebanon (AFP photo)

Lockerbie bombing suspects arrive for trial in the Netherlands

(Continued from page 1)

In the Netherlands, the two will face formal extradition proceedings to British territory, which could take several months, said Dutch Justice Minister Victor Holtus.

They are to be tried at Camp Zeist, a former military base which the Netherlands has ceded for the occasion to Scotland for the trial which will be presided over by Scottish judges under the Scottish legal system.

The two men are expected to spend at least the first night in a Dutch detention centre, before being transferred to Zeist.

The landmark deal is the first time national jurisdiction has been transferred to another country for trial. The proceedings will be attended by U.N. observers.

The stand-off over the suspects led to the imposition of crippling U.N. sanctions against Libya in

1992. They included embargoes on air travel, restrictions on the arms trade and on Libyan officials travelling abroad and were widened to include a freeze on Libyan financial assets abroad and limits on importing equipment for its oil industry.

Libya estimated last year that the sanctions have caused more than 10,000 deaths because of the unavailability of medicines and cost the economy some \$26.5 billion.

Meanwhile, Italian Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini was due to fly to Tripoli on Tuesday, the Egyptian news agency MENA reported, becoming the first official to visit Libya following the expected lifting of sanctions.

Egypt's national carrier Egypt Air will start flights to Libya as soon as the sanctions have been lifted and permission obtained, civil aviation officials said.

NATO targets Serb troops as weather clears

(Continued from page 1)

Rugova, leader of the moderate faction in the Kosovo Albanian independence movement, evoked the presence of police around his house, and indicated he wanted to travel abroad.

In Washington, U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen reiterated Monday that there were no immediate plans to send U.S. ground troops into Kosovo or anywhere in Yugoslavia.

In Macedonia, NATO declared "fully operational" a centre to the north of Skopje to process the 120,000 refugees who have crossed the mountain border from Kosovo.

Tens of thousands of hungry and exhausted Kosovo refugees were still stranded at the Macedonian border on Monday, while some west European countries appeared keen to stop an influx of refugees across their own frontiers.

As NATO put the number of ethnic Albanians driven from their homes in Kosovo over the past year at 831,000, the U.N. refugee agency said that of 120,000 refugees in Macedonia, 85,000 were still camped in

two cold and muddy border zones with Yugoslavia.

"Some 65,000 are in the area of Blace, 20,000 are in or trying to get to Jazince, less than 2,000 are in Kumanovo and the rest are scattered over Macedonia," said UNHCR spokeswoman Paula Ghedini. Another 50,000 were expected in the coming days.

Ghedini said the agency was hearing from refugees that the queue of those waiting to cross from Serbia at Jazince stretched for 25 km.

"We need to get these people out," Ghedini told reporters.

"It is terrible there. It is extremely muddy. The rain is not helping. We have already weakened people who went through a harrowing experience for four days. They waited at the border: they have not eaten."

Some 34,000 Kosovo Albanians were driven into Albania by Serb forces on Sunday and 10,000 had been sent to Macedonia, NATO said. It put the number expelled from Kosovo, since NATO air attacks against Yugoslavia began on March 24, at 360,000.

European Union countries have begun flying in food, tents, medical supplies and

other equipment to Kosovo's neighbours in a bid to stem pressure from refugees to be flown out to the West.

The EU and NATO agreed at the weekend to give sanctuary to more than 100,000 of the ethnic Albanians.

Wilby would not give any damage figures, saying only that NATO had hit "a comprehensive set of targets and we used quite a lot of aeroplanes."

The latest forecast is for clear skies up to Thursday — a window of opportunity NATO plans to use to the hilt.

Wilby admitted, however, that going after the soldiers and police would not be easy.

Despite critically low fuel stocks, the Serb forces and tanks are playing a "cat-and-mouse" game in rough terrain and deserted Kosovo towns, he said.

Meanwhile, Yugoslav Foreign Minister Zvezdan Jovanovic has told U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan he would be party to undermining the United Nations if he did nothing to halt NATO's "aggression."

In a letter to Annan circulated on Monday, Jovanovic said Belgrade had warned against "the threats of

aggression" by NATO in notes to the Security Council on Feb. 1 and March 17, and had called for emergency action on March 24, the day NATO bombing and missile attacks began.

"I have been deeply disappointed that, despite our appeal and the efforts of... peace-loving member states, the Security Council has failed to act in accordance with its responsibilities as set forth in the [U.N.] Charter," the foreign minister said.

NATO last Tuesday expanded its hit list to include the Yugoslav ground forces, which it accuses of orchestrating the mass exodus of Kosovo's ethnic Albanian population in a bid to destabilise the entire Balkans.

Wilby accused them of continuing "their ethnic cleansing with their customary brutality."

He produced an aerial photograph of the western Kosovo village of Glodjane to show Serb tanks around buildings and civilians "in a holding area, presumably awaiting transportation to the border."

Wilby said two other photographs — which he did not produce — showed that

the civilians had disappeared and the village was set alight.

Meanwhile, NATO approved the U.S. deployment of 24 AH-64 Apache combat helicopters and their 2,600 military support staff to Albania on the condition that Albania officially gives its nod, an official said.

"The council [of NATO's 19 ambassadors] has approved a request by the Secretary General [Javier Solana] to the government of Albania," the official said.

The U.S. Defence Department on Sunday announced it was sending the "tank-killing" Apaches to Albania for attacks against Serb ground forces in Kosovo that the Albanian government had already approved the deployment.

NATO spokesman Jamie Shea said earlier that the helicopters would "significantly enhance our ability to go after those ground targets in Kosovo."

According to NATO sources, the ambassadors had been concerned over the Apaches' deployment because of the risk of the helicopters making Albania a target of Serbian attacks, thus expanding the conflict in the Balkans.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 477311-19

PROGRAMME TWO

19:00 Le Journal
19:15 Eating and Health
19:30 News headlines
19:33 Thalassa
20:30 Plotlines
21:15 Beyond 2000
22:00 News in English
22:30 Mozart/French

PRAYER TIMES

05:55 Fajr
05:14 (Sunrise) Doha
11:38 Dhuhur
15:12 'Asr
18:02 Maghrib
19:21 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweidieh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4623366
Anglican Church Tel.
4624853/4624811.
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4771751.
Armenian International Church
Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Church in
Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Lat-

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
05:00 Aqaba (add) (RJ)
08:45 Amsterdam (New York) (RJ)
09:00 Aqaba, Vienna (RJ)
11:15 Geneva, Paris (RJ)
12:30 Amsterdam (add) (RJ)
12:30 Frankfurt (RJ)
13:05 London (RJ)
13:45 Madrid (RJ)
15:35 Cairo (RJ)
20:40 Damascus (RJ)
21:00 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
21:00 Beirut (RJ)
22:00 Jeddah (two flights) (RJ)

Other Flights
14:00 Riyadh (SV)
14:00 Doha, Bahrain (GF)
18:35 Beirut (ME)
19:00 Dubai (EK)
20:00 Tel Aviv (LY)
20:00 Beirut, Sanaa (LY)
23:40 Beirut, Amsterdam (ME)
00:25 Bucharest (RO)
02:00 Milan (AZ)
03:20 Istanbul (TK)
05:35 Larnaca (CY)
05:55 Damascus, London (BA)
06:25 Paris (AF)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
05:00 Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)
08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
16:30 Tel Aviv (from Marka Airport) (RW)
20:30 Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 44 (52700). Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201-5

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:00 Damascus (RJ)
07:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
07:25 Aqaba (add) (RJ)
09:30 Karachi, Dubai (RJ)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
07:25 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
08:50 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
18:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
18:45 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW)

Deserts

08/27

Jordan Valley 14/30

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 24, Aqaba 31. Humidity readings: Amman 22 per cent, Aqaba 20 per cent.

Following are the temperatures expected today in the following areas:

Ajloun 08/19
Jerash 13/25
Um Qays 13/25
Madaba 09/23
Petra 11/27
Dead Sea 18/32

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Warm and dusty weather conditions will prevail with clouds appearing at different altitudes. Scattered showers are expected at night and winds westerly moderate to active. In Aqaba, it will be relatively hot and dusty, winds northerly moderate to active and seas calm.

Amman 11/25
Aqaba 15/31

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Abdul Rahim Mustafa 4744685
Dr. Issam Asmar 4890504
Dr. Youssef Nasser 4751144
Dr. Nidal Al-Jas'ad 4751672
AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy 5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy 5537004

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 4637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 4621111, 4637777
Fire Brigade 4617101
Blood Bank 4775121
Highway Police 5343402
Traffic Police 4896390
Public Security Dept. 4630321
Hotel Complaints 5605800
Price Complaints 5661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints 4897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 4787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs 5661101
Jordan Television 4773111
Radio Jordan 4774111
Water Authority 5680100
J. Electricity Authority 5815615
Electric Power Co. 4636381

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199
The Islamic, Abdi 5666131/7
Hussein Medical Centre 5856856
Luzmila 4630195
Khaldi Maternity 4644281/6
Akileh Maternity 4642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
Malhas, J. Amman 4636140
Palestine, Smeisani 5607071
Smeisani Hospital 5157101
Jordan Hospital 5607550
University Hospital 5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital 5667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdali 5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 4771013
Al-Bashir 4775111/26
Army, Marka 4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 5157100
Amal Hospital 5607155
Al Amal Cancer Centre 5353000
Jerusalem Hospital 4387181
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (05)983323
Zarqa National Hospital. (05)900260
Ibn Sina Hospital (05)986731
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (05)990990
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555



HRH Prince Faisal Ben Al Hussein, the Regent, visits the Prime Ministry where he met with Deputy Prime Ministers Marwan Hmoud and Ayman Majali (Petra photo)

Families of Jordanian prisoners in Israel lack faith in medical team's report

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — A spokesman for the committee seeking the release of Jordanian prisoners in Israel lambasted a visit by a Jordanian medical team to the prisoners and said they have little faith that the report the team is expected to release will be accurate.

Saleh Ajlouni, who visited the 14 prisoners along with their relatives three days after the visit of the medical delegation, said Jordanian prisoners were disappointed by the visit of the team.

Ajlouni said that during the relatives' visit, prisoners told their families that the Jordanian doctors "treated them as if they were not Jordanian nationals and showed no sym-

pathy towards them during the short visit."

"The doctors did not perform their job properly. They failed to perform the necessary medical checks on the prisoners and relied mainly on the reports of Israeli physicians," Ajlouni charged.

He told the Jordan Times that the relatives are demanding an investigation into what he described as "strange treatment" by the doctors towards their kin.

"During our visit, I met with all the prisoners and all of them had the same impression of the Jordanian doctors," he added, referring to the three-doctor team representing the Royal Medical Services who went to Ashkelon prison on March 21.

Director of the RMS General Yousef Gsoss, was not available for comment on Monday.

The committee believes that there are 16 Jordanian prisoners held in Israel who were sentenced to different jail terms for taking part in separate military attacks against Israel.

The medical team is expected to publish a report on the health condition of these prisoners soon.

Ajlouni criticised Israeli security measures at the King Hussein Bridge and treatment of the prisoners' relatives, mostly elderly men and women and children, on their arrival at Ashkelon prison.

Associations committee to create 'tribunal' to investigate 'normalising' professionals

By Dima Hamdan

AMMAN — A popular committee that opposes the 1994 peace treaty with Israel said it will set up a tribunal to interrogate professional union members who they say violate the associations' bylaws by normalising ties with the Jewish state.

Ali Abu Sukkar, head of the anti-normalisation committee run by the 13-member Union of Professional Associations, said the committee is also preparing a list of individuals and companies accused of "cooperating" with Israel, and is calling for a general boycott of those companies. The list is expected to be announced publicly this month.

However, Abu Sukkar, who is also the president of the Jordan Engineers Association, said the list "is not a 'black list' and cannot be termed slanderous."

"The tribunal will either boycott the accused, or publish their names on the list as a mere announcement," he said.

Others, however, disagreed saying that such measures contradict the peace treaty, and therefore, are illegal.

"The issue of normalisation was set in the peace treaty, which was ratified by the Parliament," said Saleh Jaroudi, a lawyer. "Oppos-

ing the treaty (with these measures) is illegal."

Jaroudi also said that decisions made by the tribunal can be annulled by the Supreme Court.

Past governments also have said that such mea-

'It is not a black list... We are merely announcing the names and activities of those who cooperate with Israel'

— Abu Sukkar

sures are illegal because they contravene the spirit of the peace treaty, which became law after it was endorsed by the Parliament and the government.

Abu Sukkar said, however, that his group is "merely

announcing the names and activities of those who cooperate with Israel."

"[Those whose names will be published] do not deny their activities, and are convinced that their actions are legal and exploit the current laws and agreements (with Israel)," Abu Sukkar, who pointed out that the associations "have always warned against [signing a treaty]."

"Now our warnings are becoming a reality," he said.

The country's opposition has argued that peace and normalisation between Jordan and Israel is a disincentive for Israel to fulfill the Oslo Accords signed in 1993 with the Palestinians.

The Middle East peace process has been deadlocked since Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu took office in June 1996, and Jordan has become increasingly frustrated at a lack of progress in the Palestinian-Israeli track and tangible fruits of peace.

Although increased economic cooperation was expected to underpin the treaty, Jordan has complained that Israeli bureaucracy and security measures have prevented the export of Jordanian goods to both Israel and the Palestinian territories since the bilateral trade accord was signed in 1995. Jordan exports a mere

\$25 million to the West Bank, whereas Israel enjoys \$2 billion in trade with the territories.

Abu Sukkar also said that normalisation with Israel has damaged some important economic sectors due to unfair competition.

"Companies established in cooperation with the Israelis are earning privileges not available to national investors," he said, referring to companies in the Qualifying Industrial Zone near Irbid. Companies established in the QIZ are allowed to export duty and quota free to the U.S. market, provided the company has one of two forms of Israeli involvement. Companies outside the zone, although established many years ago, cannot benefit.

"This has created unfair competition and often resulted in the bankruptcy of some Jordanian companies," Abu Sukkar said.

Jordan's 13 professional associations have prevented their members from normalising by forbidding them from having any ties with Israelis or Israel.

According to the associations' bylaws, those who do can be expelled, a prerogative they have been known to exercise.

Recently, Amal Dabbas, a well-known Jordanian comedian, lost her membership in the Artists Associa-

tion because she allegedly slandered the association in an interview on Israeli television.

The Artists Association recently raised questions about the upcoming Amman Theatre Festival. The organiser of the event, Al Fawanees Theatre Group, has been accused of "normalising" ties because it invited Al Qasaba group, whose members are Arabs from the territories occupied in 1948, and carry Israeli citizenship.

"We have to differentiate between an Arab and an Israeli," Abu Sukkar said. "However, my advice is to avoid any action that would raise suspicions."

Abu Sukkar, however, said that the nascent tribunal and its activities will not contradict the legislation of the Wadi Araba agreement, arguing that penalties imposed by the tribunal do not have a "tangible" legal impact, nor does the tribunal have a legal basis within the associations' bylaws.

Although the associations have no legal framework within which to fine their members, the opposition as a whole historically has been influential in mobilising public opinion for a boycott.

Government officials were unavailable for comment on Monday.

Seminar discusses water recycling

AMMAN (Petra) — Delegates representing 17 regional countries including Jordan on Monday opened a four-day meeting in Amman dedicated to water resource protection and recycled wastewater.

The delegates will also review plans and programmes prepared by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to help ensure safe water and to avoid water crises in the Near East region.

In an address at the opening session, Minister of Health Ishaq Maraga said Jordanian authorities have been involved in recycling wastewater over the past years in view of the country's growing water needs and due to the scarcity of water resources.

In his address, delivered on his behalf by the Ministry of Health's Director of Primary Health Care Zuhair Tef, Maraga said the Health Ministry maintains constant control over the quality of water in cooperation with the Water Authority to ensure safe and clean potable water.

Furthermore, Maraga said, in 1994 and 1995 Jordan succeeded in recycling waste-

water for agricultural irrigation and breeding fish.

According to the minister, countries of the region share water-related problems resulting from rapid population growth, an increase in water requirements in the industrial and agricultural sectors and pollution of water resources.

Ali Khan, representative of the WHO's Amman-based Centre for Environmental Health Activities, warned that due to rapid population growth, Middle Eastern countries by the year 2025 are bound to face the grim fact that per capita water share will be reduced by 50 per cent.

Khan underlined the need to search for new water resources to compensate for water shortages and said the situation could further deteriorate in view of the excessive use of fertilisers and industrial waste dumping, something which will have serious negative impact on meagre water resources that could be detrimental to public health, particularly among children.

Peace Game ends with Kosovo crisis simulation

AMMAN (J.T.) — An international "peace game" on the current Kosovo crisis closed here on Monday with a call by HRH Prince Hassan for the establishment of an international "Zakat Fund" to alleviate the suffering of hundreds of thousands of ethnic Albanian refugees.

"There is an important role yet to be fulfilled by Arab and Muslim states," said Prince Hassan in his remarks, which were read by Kamel Abu Jaber, director of the Jordan Institute of Diplomacy, at the closing session of the two-day seminar/simulation.

"Probably the best humanitarian relief could be [made available through] a Zakat Fund that is urgently needed [and that] along with funds by similar organisations, both governmental and non-governmental, could play a major role in easing human suffering."

Prince Hassan, a member of the UN High Commission for Refugees Informal Advisory Group, expressed "sorrow that time and again the human tragedy in the Balkan crisis, as elsewhere in our

world, assumes a secondary position to military-political considerations."

Efforts to alleviate the misery of the estimated 300,000 refugees from Kosovo should include "a guarantee of safe passage to host countries such as Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Bosnia, as well as serious efforts to aid the already fragile economies of these countries," Prince Hassan said.

"Extreme poverty and destitution, in addition to the massive influx of refugees, are likely to aggravate the existing sense of injustice among ethnic Albanian Macedonians," he added.

Jordan last week recalled its chargé d'affaires in Belgrade to express its condemnation of Serb campaigns against Kosovo Albanians.

His Majesty King Abdullah also last week expressed deep concern over the reported Serb actions, including ethnic cleansing, killing and displacement of Muslim Kosovars. He instructed the government to send humanitarian and medical assistance to the refugees.

The simulation exercise, entitled "Crisis Avoidance Through Conflict Prevention," organised by the Institute of Diplomacy in cooperation with the Jordanian Armed Forces and UNESCO, analysed the current Kosovo crisis in an attempt to develop mechanisms of conflict prevention that might help define and preempt crises in the Middle East.

The two-day conference brought together a host of government and armed forces officials, as well as academics from Jordan, the U.S., Canada, Europe, the Palestinian self-rule areas, Egypt, Turkey, and Israel.

In Sunday's introductory sessions, participants focused on peacemaking in the Balkans and complications of peace-building, and drafted a general diagnosis of the Kosovo crisis.

Monday's sessions were devoted to a simulation of the case study, followed by a review of how lessons drawn from the Balkan experience may be applied to the Middle East.

Family and friends eulogise Sa'ad

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — Relatives, friends and colleagues eulogised Awni Sa'ad on Sunday at a ceremony marking one year since the untimely death of the prominent psychiatrist. Sa'ad who was fatally shot on April 8, 1998, in his clinic in Shmeisani, was remembered by Minister of Health Ishaq Maraga as a "devoted, honest, candid and loyal" professional.

The minister, who was addressing more than 300 people who attended the ceremony at the Royal Cultural Centre, said Sa'ad had set exemplary standards and values for himself "from which he never strayed."

His colleagues who organised the event said they want to set the record straight after damaging rumours surfaced following Sa'ad's murder.

"Several rumours circulated following his death, but it was proven that Awni Sa'ad remained the man we knew him to be — honest, devoted and patriotic," Maraga said. In a highly publicised case

that shocked the local community, Awni Sa'ad along with lawyer Hanna Nadeh and his son, Suheil, were shot in Sa'ad's clinic.

Jordan Medical Association President Basem Dajani described Sa'ad as a martyr who died upholding his professional oath as a doctor.

"I call on all my colleagues to look at Sa'ad as a role model for them to preserve their profession and their oath," Dajani said.

Another colleague President of the Jordanian Psychiatrists Society Mohammad Kan'an, praised Sa'ad's role in advancing the field of psychiatric medicine in Jordan by researching and studying new methods in his field. Life-long friend, Ziad Sharaiha, said Sa'ad was never materialistic and had no interest in collecting antiques or artwork, because to him "the value of the human being is him or herself and not what he or she owns."

Sharaiha's remark was in reference to rumours of an illicit art deal with his

assailants.

The Criminal Court last month sentenced Mohammed Jaghamen, 35, to death after convicting him of the murder of Sa'ad, and the two Nadehs. Two other defendants, Wa'el Khalil, 23, and Kayed Mohammad, 42, received 30-years with hard labour for complicity in the murders.

Sa'ad's daughter Samia expressed appreciation to those who attended the eulogy saying, "your participation helped make Awni Sa'ad's memory an embodiment of the values and principles by which he lived." Born in Amman in 1941, Sa'ad graduated from Glasgow University in Scotland in 1968. He practised medicine in many British hospitals between the years 1971 and 1973. In 1973, he served as a consultant and director of the Psychiatry Department at the Military Hospital in Amman and the King Hussein Medical Centre. In 1981, he established the Jordanian Psychiatry Society.

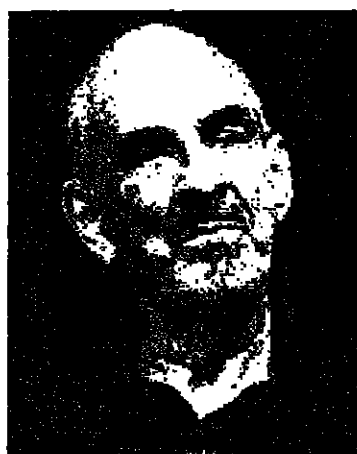
Swedish film season: Death and existentialism with Ingmar Bergman

By Omar Karmi

AMMAN — According to Scandinavian folklore, Death will give you one last chance. If you can beat Death at chess he will let you live a while longer. The only catch is... you can't! Death never loses, and no one lives forever.

This, and other existential topics, is exactly what you might expect from Scandinavian films, but none are made better than those of Oscar-winning Swedish film director Ingmar Bergman. Long a legend in his own right, four of his films will be shown at the Shoman Forum in Amman, 1st Circle, in a mini-Bergman-season that starts tonight and runs until April 20.

The Seventh Seal, which opens the season, makes no bones about it; it is about the meaning of life. Set in Medieval Sweden, a returning crusader (Max Von Sydow) grapples with just this dilemma as he has come to question his faith. In plague-torn times, his existential anguish is juxtaposed with the suffering of those around him as they succumb one by one to the disease.



When he is confronted with Death, the knight asks for a game of chess, trying to stall for time to at last make some sense of it all. Entangled in the meantime with a family of travelling actors and comedians, his mission finally becomes to save this little family of simple, but happy folk.

It is a film saturated with powerful imagery, not least the final sequence, one of the most famous scenes in film-history, where death dances off to the nether world with the doomed.

The scene was actually a fluke. Having finished shooting, Bergman noticed a cloud whose shape he found particularly interesting. The camera was hastily set up again, but most of the actors had already left, so a couple of curious tourists, a few grips and the runners, with no clue as to what was happening, were asked to get into costume and dance away. The rest, as they say...

It's not all doom and gloom though. Wild Strawberries (April 13) is about an elderly, emotionally dried up academic who, on his way to pick up a university award, through accident relives some of life's magic, and the joys of youth and nature.

Fanny and Alexander (April 20), for which Bergman won an Oscar for best foreign film, is part autobiographical, and concerns a childhood that perhaps is more wishful thinking on the directors part, but nevertheless makes for a fun and grand spectacle.

Bergman was never one to limit himself to either style or subject and the selection of films on show at the Shoman Forum,

provide a glimpse of the many faces of this unique film-maker, whose career has spanned 40 years and 40 films, not including his work in theatre. This is perhaps suitable for a man whose "basic view of things — is not to have any basic view of things."



Listing

Shoman Forum,
1st Circle, Jebel Amman
All films show at 6:00 p.m.
Tues., April 6 — The Seventh Seal
Tues., April 13 — Wild Strawberries
Sun, April 18 — The Shame
Thurs., April 20 — Fanny and Alexander

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILMS

- German film "Karbid und Sauerampfer" (with subtitles in English) at Goethe-Institut, Jabal Amman on Wednesday April 7 at 7:30 p.m.
- "The Seventh Seal" at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabal Amman at 6:30 p.m.
- "The Peacemaker" at Books@Café, Jabal Amman at 8:30 p.m. (Tel. 4650457/8).

EXHIBITIONS

- Works by Jordanian ceramist Mahmoud Taha at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh (Tel. 4643251/2), until May 6. Also showing an exhibition of photographs by Jordanian artist Adnan Sharif entitled "Spring at Darat Al Funun," until May 6.
- Works by Jordanian artist Shereen Audi Kurdi at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Amman, until April 28.
- Display of Iraq Al Amir collection at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre of the Noor Al Hussein Foundation until April 29 (Tel. 5699141/2). (The exhibition includes handicraft, pottery, handwoven fabrics, cushions, handmade paper, and food).
- "Amman... A Meeting Point" by Swedish artists Aym Edholm and Hakan Rhenberg at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh. Also displaying works by contemporary Arab artists, until April 22.
- Works on paper by Russian artist Yuri Pestov entitled "Al Ferdouse, the Rose Garden" at the Jordanian Plastic Artists Association, Jabal Weibdeh, until April 12 (Tel. 4623297).
- "Colours of the Sufist World" by plastic artist Abdul Hussein Twayj at Orfali Art Gallery, Umm Utheima, until April 12.

China cracks down on dissidents marking Tiananmen

BEIJING (AFP) — China on Monday cracked down on dissidents remembering those killed in the Tiananmen Square bloodshed 10 years ago as the country marked a traditional festival honouring the dead.

Ding Zilin, mother of a student killed in the 1989 crackdown on the student-led protests, was prevented from leaving home as she tried to buy food to make an offering for her dead son.

And exiled dissident Wang Xizhe was turned back in Seoul by the airline he was travelling with after warnings from Beijing that he should not defy an unwritten ban on the return of pro-democracy activists.

"We're not allowed to leave the university campus (where we live)," Ding told AFP by telephone.

"We want to commemorate our son who was killed in the student protests of June 4, 1989 for Qing Ming (commemoration)," according to Chinese tradition," she said in a letter to President Jiang Zemin and Premier Zhu Rongji read over a borrowed mobile phone.

Ding said she and her husband Jiang Peikun tried to leave the university campus to buy shrimps — her son's favourite food — at a nearby shop, but were blocked by plainclothes officers who tried to detain them.

As Ding was trying to leave her home, where she has been under house arrest since March 3, police elsewhere in the capital detained four activists who had intended to go to the airport to meet Wang.

Sha Yuguang, Gao Hongming, Zha Jianguo and He Depu, were taken away by police a few hours before Wang's scheduled arrival, the Hong Kong-based Information Centre of Human Rights and Democratic Movement in China said.

They were all released later Monday.

The detentions come on the eve of Premier Zhu Rongji's visit to the United States, during which he is expected to be dogged by demonstrations protesting at China's human rights record.

Security was also tight around Beijing's largest cemetery at Babaoshan in the west of the city, with eight or nine police vans outside the nearest subway station and plain-clothes and

armed police patrolling the area.

A steady flow of people moved to and from the cemetery, carrying flowers, boxes, fake money and other offerings for the dead, on a day when filial descendants sweep and tidy the graves of their ancestors.

The festival of the dead is a sensitive date in the Chinese political calendar, and has in the past triggered violent anti-government protests.

Wang Xizhe's attempted return to China was timed to coincide with the festival. The veteran pro-democracy activist had applied several times to return to carry out rites for his father, who died in February, but had received no answer.

An official with South Korea's Asiana Airlines, with which Wang had hoped to travel to Beijing, said he had been persuaded to board a flight to Bangkok after warnings from Chinese officials.

"The Beijing authorities told us that Wang should not be allowed to enter China. So we persuaded him to go directly to Bangkok. He agreed and left of his own decision," Asiana spokeswoman Oh Yon-Keun told AFP.

Wang was travelling on a U.S. travel document with no passport.

Philosophy professor Ding became one of China's most outspoken rights activists after her teenage son was gunned down by Chinese troops on the evening of June 3, 1989.

She heads a group of activists pushing for a reassessment of the bloodshed, when People's Liberation Army troops brutally suppressed six weeks of peaceful student-led protests in Tiananmen Square in June 1989.

Beijing has never given an official figure for how many died and classes the "incident" as counter-revolutionary rebellion. But it is believed hundreds maybe thousands died in the massacre.

Three activists were detained in the eastern city of Hangzhou Saturday after laying wreaths on the graves of victims of the massacre at local cemeteries.

Tiananmen Square has been fenced off since the end of last year and will remain closed for renovations until after the June 4 anniversary.

Chinese newspaper prints photo of Clinton as Hitler

BEIJING (AP) — A Chinese newspaper doctor a picture of U.S. President Bill Clinton to make him look like Adolf Hitler, an image that highlights the strident tone China's state-run media has adopted in its coverage of NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia.

The Yangcheng evening news, a popular newspaper published in southern China, printed the photo of Clinton with a small black mustache and a protruding jaw on the front page of its most recent weekly news edition.

Clinton was pictured looking down on a satellite photo of Europe as flames engulf the northern part of the continent.

"The spectre above Kosovo," the headline read. While Chinese leaders have condemned the U.S.-led NATO bombing as a violation of the U.N. Charter and interference in a sovereign country's affairs, China's state-run media

have been less restrained in their criticism.

Newspapers have accused the United States of bullying Yugoslavia and have portrayed the Yugoslav Serbs as united in resistance to the NATO attack.

Inside its weekly edition, published last Thursday, the Yangcheng evening news carried three pages of stories about the crisis, including a sympathetic profile of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic that called him a "people's hero."

The newspaper kept up the barrage in its Sunday edition with a signed commentary that accused NATO of trampling on international law. It said the capture by Yugoslav forces of three U.S. servicemen "showed once again the hypocrisy of America's human rights outlook."

They "are so concerned about their compatriots' fate, but they don't show the least bit of pity for the Yugoslav people that they bomb," the newspaper said.



Tibetan activists shout anti-Chinese slogans during a demonstration near parliament April 5, 1999, in New Delhi. About 100 protesters demanded that the U.N. Human Rights Commission meeting in Geneva adopt a resolution censuring China over its human rights abuses in Tibet (AFP photo)

Radicals seek referendum on future of Tibet

NEW DELHI (AP) — Any deal the Dalai Lama makes with China about the future of Tibet should be approved in a referendum of the Tibetan people, the radical Tibetan Youth Congress said Monday.

"The bottom line is, we are a democratic people. Every political issue should be approved by the people," said Tseren Norbu, president of the Tibetan Youth Congress, one of the most vocal Tibetan critics of the Dalai Lama's policies toward China.

To press the demand for independence, Norbu said three Tibetans — including a former political prisoner in

Tibet — would begin an indefinite hunger strike on Monday in front of the United Nations offices in Geneva.

A referendum, or some other exercise, should involve all Tibetan people — the 6 million living in Tibet and China, and more than 100,000 living in exile, Norbu said. "Opinions are divided. That exercise should be held," he told The Associated Press at a rally in India's capital.

The Tibetan Youth Congress opposes the Dalai Lama's willingness to forego independence in favour of autonomy within China.

A group of 150 protesters marched towards the Indian parliament building until they were stopped by a police barricade. They chanted slogans against what they called the Chinese occupation of their homeland and exhorting the United Nations to help them.

"Tibet is ours. We will give our lives and souls, but not the land of Tibet," they shouted in unison.

Impatience with the Dalai Lama erupted into open defiance last year when Youth Congress volunteers staged a hunger strike in New Delhi. It ended after 49 days when police took them to hospital where they were fed intra-

venously. A 50-year-old former monk, protesting the peaceful ending of the strike, set himself ablaze and later died.

In 1959, the Dalai Lama and 100,000 of his followers fled to India from Tibet after a failed uprising against the presence of Chinese troops.

In a speech last month to mark 40 years of Tibetan exile, the Dalai Lama again forswore independence for Tibet and said he was confident he could control the radicals if China agreed to a "just and fair solution." He pledged to "use my moral authority to persuade the Tibetans not to seek separation."

India ally's ministers to quit government

MADRAS (R) — India's fragile year-old coalition government was plunged into crisis on Monday when a key southern ally decided to pull out its two ministers.

The All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) party slammed Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's minority coalition, led by his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), for rejecting its demands for the sacking of the defence minister and opening doors for political negotiations with other parties.

The Tamil Nadu-based party did not immediately announce whether its 19 deputies in the 545-seat lower house of parliament would withdraw their crucial support for the government.

However, this move was widely expected amid mounting speculation that AIADMK was edging closer to the Congress Party headed by Sonia Gandhi, widow of the assassinated Premier Rajiv Gandhi.

The BJP said it was ready to

face any problems arising out of the AIADMK's decision.

Government ministers said earlier that the coalition was prepared to face a vote of confidence in parliament. "The government has a majority in parliament, we feel there is no threat to the government," Information and Broadcasting Minister Pramod Mahajan said without elaborating.

The AIADMK's leader Jayalalitha, a former movie star, said in a statement: "The AIADMK is withdrawing its two ministers from the Vajpayee council of ministers with immediate effect."

"Both Thambi Durai and M.R. Janarthanam will be submitting their resignations to the prime minister tomorrow," she said.

Durai is minister for law, justice and company affairs, while Janarthanam is a junior minister for personnel, public grievances and pensions.

Vajpayee's government survived a confidence vote by a slender 13-vote margin last year and has clung precariously

to power ever since in a fragmented lower house, Lok Sabha.

Analysts said a new vote could be very close if the AIADMK pulls the plug on the government.

BJP spokesman J.P. Mathur mentioned speculation over Jayalalitha's negotiations with the Congress Party. "Something is brewing between Sonia Gandhi and her," he said.

"Whatever turns the situation may take, the BJP will meet it successfully and defeat their game in every manner," he added.

Earlier on Monday, the cabinet rejected AIADMK's demand, shared by the Congress Party, that Defence Minister George Fernandes be removed and the man he sacked as naval chief, Admiral Vishnu Bhagwat last December, be reinstated.

It also turned down an opposition demand for a parliamentary probe into the admiral's sacking.

"In the 50 years of our

democracy never has a cabinet met with the single-point agenda of sacking an ally that is responsible for the majority the Vajpayee government has thus far enjoyed in the Lok Sabha," Jayalalitha said.

She said she would meet leaders of political parties in Delhi from April 12 for "the creation of structures that will protect the national interests and ensure that all Indians feel safe and are able to progress in all spheres of endeavour."

"After discussions with other political parties, I will take a final decision on the AIADMK stand in accordance with the unanimous decision of the general council of the AIADMK and the supreme national interest," she said.

"This will only heighten political uncertainty and will put the markets through a rough patch," Maulik Sharda of Kaji and Maulik Securities said in Bombay after her statement.

"Now the AIADMK has moved one step closer to withdrawing support," he added.

Philippines, Vietnam to stage exercises in Spratlys to ease tension

MANILA (AP) — Vietnamese troops will stage search and rescue exercises and play soccer with Filipino troops on a Philippine-held island in the disputed Spratly chain to lessen the chances of a military clash, a Philippine official said on Monday.

Defence Secretary Orlando Mercado said Vietnamese officials agreed to the joint exercises in a meeting in Hanoi last week.

Mercado, who was appointed last year, visited Vietnam, Malaysia and Singapore last week as part of traditional calls on counterparts.

"It's important that our troops know each other because we are facing each other in the

Spratlys," Mercado said. The exercises will include search and rescue, medical drills and sports activities among Vietnamese and Filipino troops stationed in the Spratlys, he said.

Mercado said he suggested basketball, which is popular among Filipinos, but learned that Vietnamese prefer soccer, which he accepted.

The two countries still need to discuss the details of the exercises, but the initial plan is to hold the exercises on Pag-Asa island, which is occupied by Filipino troops, and later move to a Vietnamese-controlled area.

Mercado said he also has accepted an invitation by Vietnam for Philippine

troops to participate in soccer games in Hanoi in December.

The Spratlys, located in the South China Sea near strategic sea lanes and possible oil deposits, are also claimed in whole or in part by Brunei, China, Malaysia and Taiwan.

Mercado said they also would ask Malaysia and other claimant countries to join the exercises. He said his visits to Vietnam and Malaysia were not meant to form a bloc among claimant countries against China, which has the strongest military in the region.

The Philippines and China have been entangled in a dispute over ownership of Mischief Reef, an area in the Spratlys where Chinese

workers built huts in 1995.

Philippine officials protested last year when China began enlarging the huts into three-story structures that Mercado said could be used militarily.

China says the structures are storm shelters for Chinese fishermen.

While continuing bilateral meetings with China to discuss the dispute, the Philippines has begun seeking international support to halt what it says is a gradual Chinese occupation of the Spratlys that could threaten the freedom of navigation in the South China Sea.

Philippine officials say they are preparing to bring the dispute over Mischief Reef to a U.N. court, a move that China opposes,

NEWS IN BRIEF

Philippines' Estrada says he will jail corrupt relatives

MANILA (AP) — To stress his commitment to fight graft, Philippine President Joseph Estrada said on Monday he will jail any relative found to have entered into corrupt deals with the government. Last month, Estrada signed an order barring government officials from awarding contracts to his family and friends after several relatives, including a mistress, were accused of links to a suspect textbook deal. "I won't forgive anybody who will be involved in graft and corruption, especially my relatives," Estrada said. "I'll make them examples as long as it'll be proven that they deserved to land in jail." One of Estrada's mistresses, her sister, Estrada's third cousin and one other woman have been linked by Philippine newspapers to alleged influence-peddling in attempts to receive government contracts for school materials. Estrada urged people making accusations to cite any evidence they have in official complaints filed in courts. Press Secretary Rodolfo Reyes said the accusations could be the handiwork of political rivals who want to damage Estrada's image. He noted, however, that Estrada has a record-high approval rating according to a recent poll. Last month, Estrada filed a libel suit against the Manila Times over an article which suggested he had allowed an improper power plant repair deal.

Vietnamese dissident faces three years in jail

HANOI (AFP) — Dissident scientist Nguyen Thanh Giang, who was arrested last month, faces up to three years in jail for breaching Vietnam's freedom of expression laws, the foreign ministry said Monday. Giang, 63, was arrested in a Hanoi street on March 4 with what authorities said was "anti-socialist propaganda." He has been detained several times in recent years. In a written answer to a query, the foreign ministry told AFP that Giang had "violated" Article 205 A of the criminal code on breaches of freedom of speech and association which threaten state interests. Giang faces a prison sentence of between three months and three years, but the ministry would not say if he was still being held or when he would be tried. The same law has been used regularly in recent years to sentence dissidents and intellectuals to jail terms.

Mount Cameroon lava inches closer to villages

YAOUNDE (AFP) — A river of lava from Mount Cameroon, a volcano which erupted March 28, on Monday reached village plantations and was less than three kilometres from inhabited areas, local radio reported. At its current pace, the thick flow of lava could reach the villages of Batake and Bakingele, home to almost 1,000 people, in about three days. No significant volcanic activity was recorded Monday, according to the radio, which authorities said would broadcast evacuation orders if and when it became necessary. On Sunday, state radio said new activity on Mount Cameroon was "worrying" after a volcanologist described the situation as "very explosive."

China landslide sweeps bus off cliff, 18 killed

BEIJING (R) — A landslide swept a factory bus off a cliff-top road in China's eastern province of Zhejiang recently, killing 18 people, a newspaper said. The bus was hurtled into a reservoir 20 metres deep in Lishui city on March 25, the Qiantang weekend newspaper said in a report seen by Reuters on Monday. Twenty-nine of the 47 people aboard survived. An overloaded bus careened off a steep slope in southwestern Sichuan province's Langzhong city on March 18 and fell 20 metres, killing 15 passengers and injuring 16, the China Consumer Journal said on Monday. It said the bus was carrying almost double its permitted 17 passengers in what it called the city's worst crash in 50 years. The case was still under investigation.

39 bodies recovered from Nigerian ferry sinking

LAGOS (AFP) — Thirty-nine bodies have been recovered from last week's sinking of a ferry boat off southeast Nigeria but the remains of others still missing are unlikely to be found, press reports said Monday. The MV George went down late Thursday in a storm 60 nautical miles along the coast from Port Harcourt with up to 300 people aboard. On Saturday, scores of survivors were found after swimming overnight to a sandbank and being picked up by a passing barge belonging to an oil company, rescuers said. By Sunday, the bodies of 39 of the victims of the sinking had been recovered but others were reported to have been seen still trapped in the upturned hull of the boat which later sank. Monday's press reports said. Thirty-one were recovered near the boat and eight were found floating out at sea by marine police, the reports said. Attempts to retrieve more bodies were abandoned after the wreck sank, the Guardian newspaper said. The exact number of those who died is likely never to be known.

Uzbeks urge 'non-traditional' Muslims to confess

TASHKENT (R) — Uzbekistan has announced a new step to eradicate what it regards as the growing threat of religious fundamentalism by urging young men who studied "non-traditional" Islam abroad to give themselves up. Interior Minister Zakirjon Almatov told state television late on Sunday that people who responded to the appeal would not be punished but any who did not would be held accountable, as would their fathers. "I guarantee that if any of these young men who were in Chechnya, Afghanistan and Tajikistan admit their guilt, then we will carry out no punishment," he said. "If they continue this path, then we will punish them severely and make their fathers answerable to the law." It was not clear what punishment would be involved. Ex-Soviet Uzbekistan has accused neighbouring Tajikistan, as well as Afghanistan, Pakistan and Russia's breakaway region of Chechnya, of allowing young Uzbeks to train on their territory before returning to Uzbekistan in armed opposition.

ines Estrada says
all corrupt relatives

Japanese dissident
three years in jail

San Juan lava
flow to villages

on sweeps bus
4 killed

recovered
body, 3 killed

333 more
to be rescued

World News

North Korea denies again incursion into Japanese waters

SEOUL (AP) — North Korea reiterated Monday that it has nothing to do with the recent incursion of spy ships into Japanese waters.

"The ultra-rightist reactionaries of Japan invented such a shocking incident ... and are now raising a hue and cry over it," North Korea's ruling Communist Party paper, Rodong Sinmun, said in a commentary.

The commentary, carried by the North's foreign news outlet, KCNA, said Japan fabricated the incident to rally parliamentary support for new bills calling for a stronger military alliance with the United States.

Japan's coast guard first spotted two suspected spy ships off the nation's western coast on March 23. Japanese patrol boats and naval destroyers chased them for about 24 hours and fired warning shots in the first such action since

World War II.

Japan called off the pursuit after the pair of falsely marked ships reached international waters and headed towards North Korea. Japan later confirmed that the ships entered a North Korean military port.

But North Korea has denied any involvement in the incursion, calling it a premeditated Japanese smear campaign against it. "Whenever they think it necessary for their own interests, they engage in anti-DPRK (North Korea) smear campaign(s)," the commentary said.

"The Japanese authorities are now trying to make an impression as if they were interested in improved relations between the DPRK and Japan. All this is a clear indication of one more confrontation with the DPRK," it said.

Japan has no diplomatic relations with North Korea.

FBI wraps up search for missing leader of U.S. atheist group

CAMP WOOD, Texas (AP) — FBI agents completed their search of a ranch in the investigation of the disappearance of atheist leader, Madalyn Murray O'Hair.

Robert Grant, assistant special agent in charge of the FBI's San Antonio office, wouldn't comment Sunday on whether the search was successful but said: "It was not a waste of time."

FBI agents descended on the South Texas pasture on Friday, using dogs, a backhoe and a helicopter with night vision equipment. The U.S. attorney's office said the ranchers about 160 kilometres west of San Antonio are not targets of the investigation. The FBI has refused to confirm the subject of the investigation, but Texas Department of Public Safety officials have said it was helping federal agents in a search for evidence in the 1995 disappearance of Mrs. O'Hair, her son, Jon

Garth Murray, her granddaughter, Robin Murray O'Hair, and \$500,000 in gold coins.

Mrs. O'Hair founded American Atheists Inc. Last month, David R. Waters, the former office manager for Mrs. O'Hair, and Gary P. Karr were arrested on weapons charges. Waters has denied involvement in the O'Hairs' disappearance and neither man has been charged in the disappearance case.

FBI agent Bill O'Leary reportedly testified during Karr's March 26 detention hearing that Karr admitted being an accessory to four homicides in Texas and helping get rid of the victims and their property.

Karr's lawyer, Richard Helfrick, said his client cooperated with FBI questioning about homicides in Texas. Helfrick wouldn't say if Karr admitted a role in any slayings.

Immigrants stranded in snowstorm died of hypothermia

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Eight suspected illegal immigrants have died of hypothermia after a snow storm caught them by surprise while they were prepared to cross the U.S.-Mexico border.

Officials from the U.S. border control and other agencies rescued more than 50 immigrants late Thursday and Friday in and around the Cleveland national forest, about 65 kilometres east of San Diego.

The bodies of eight men, ages 20 to 32, were found Friday.

Autopsies attributed their deaths to environmental hypothermia, said Dan Matticks, an investigator with the San Diego county medical examiner's office.

"Only one had on a jacket and heavier clothing. The rest of them had light clothes, light jackets, tennis shoes, street shoes — not clothing you would want to wear in

that type of weather," Matticks said Sunday.

Authorities said the eight were part of a group that was sneaking into the United States illegally. Beefed up border patrols have pushed immigrants and smugglers to more dangerous routes, officials said.

Of the 50 immigrants who were rescued, eight remained at San Diego hospitals, the Mexican consulate in San Diego said. The others have been repatriated.

Seven of the rescued immigrants have been detained by U.S. authorities, including three who are believed to be the "coyotes," or smugglers.

Mexican authorities working the other side of the border south of Tectate had reported finding an additional two people dead and more than 80 people stranded by the cold.



A video image of stilt houses burning in Indonesia's far eastern Kai Island on April 1. Christians and Muslims wielding machetes and homemade spears guarded their own neighbourhoods in Kai Island on Monday as tensions remained high after days of communal bloodshed that killed at least 34. The unrest erupted last Wednesday, triggered by a land dispute. It peaked on Saturday when police and soldiers fired volleys of rubber bullets to disperse hundreds of Christian and Muslim combatants in Kai Besar district, leaving at least 43 wounded, witnesses said (Reuters photo)

UNICEF makes Internet appeal for North Korea aid

BEIJING (AFP) — The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has appealed via the Internet to raise \$2.3 million to immunise North Korean children facing malnutrition due to a three-year famine, organisers said Monday.

Over one million North Korean children under five, or 50 per cent of the age group, have not been vaccinated for the five basic preventable diseases, including measles, tuberculosis and smallpox, said Bernard Krisher, chairman of the web page campaign.

Endorsed by South Korean President Kim Dae Jung, the web page will also allow South Koreans to directly

donate funds to their northern neighbours, he said.

"Heretofore South Korean donors were restricted in providing relief funds to North Korea, except through the South Korean Red Cross which under the previous administration was guided by political considerations," Krisher said.

Krisher, who has visited North Korea numerous times as a journalist, set up his web page seeking donations for North Korea in 1996 following the first year of famine in the Stalinist nation and was approached by UNICEF this February to carry its Internet immunisation appeal.

His web page was pre-

viously banned in South Korea. "There are still some governments reluctant to recognise that politics should not be linked to alleviating human suffering, especially innocent children and the elderly," he said.

North Korea's immunisation programme has been devastated by ongoing economic and food problems which have led to the closure of pharmaceutical factories, erratic electricity output and a breakdown in medical transportation and refrigeration equipment, Krisher said.

The debilitating famine and failed agricultural and economic policies of the North Korean government has resulted in the

reported deaths of millions of North Koreans and led to the largest food aid campaign ever sponsored by the U.N. World Food Programme.

Information on the UNICEF immunisation programme, the medical situation in North Korea and donation details can be accessed at www.northkorea.org

"This is the most transparent programme providing help to the suffering population in North Korea. Donors will know exactly where their money is going, there is no way it could be diverted for any purpose other than for which it is intended," Krisher said.

Reprieve, clemency sought for three Philippine death convicts

MANILA (AFP) — Legislators appealed on Monday to President Joseph Estrada to pardon three death convicts set to be executed this week, while the condemned men and Estrada's spiritual adviser asked that the date be reset for later.

House of Representatives member Augusto Syjuco told reporters he has written to his party colleague Estrada to grant presidential clemency to convicted robbers Dante Piamdong, Jesus Morrallos and Archie Bulan.

"There is a ray of hope because he has said he will consult Velarde," said Representative Francis Escudero, referring to popular preacher Mike Velarde who Estrada describes as his "spiritual adviser."

The three men are scheduled to be put to death by lethal injection on Wednesday for the killing of a policeman during a 1994 bus robbery.

Under the law the lower court which convicted them sets the date of execution after the supreme court affirms the lower court's guilty verdict.

Velarde told local television GMA on Monday that he has written to Estrada seeking for "a deferment of the executions so that he can study the decision very thoroughly."

"He is really considering all possible options without necessarily inflicting harm on the fight against heinous crimes," he added.

The convicts' lawyer, Alexander Padilla, also told the station that he is seeking a temporary reprieve for his clients. He said he was not ruling out a Supreme Court petition to prevent the execution taking place.

Estrada told reporters Monday that he has received Velarde's letter. "It's purely recommendatory. We'll think

about that," he said.

Two other Filipino legislators, Robert Barbers and Michael Defensor urged Estrada to carry out the executions on schedule.

The president should not disregard the law but push for its implementation, Barbers said.

Earlier Monday, Estrada said he was seeking "divine guidance" in deciding the fate of the three convicts.

"Rest assured that I will study carefully their case because human life is at stake here," Estrada said in a radio interview.

"That's why I am praying to the Lord for divine guidance so that my decision will benefit the cause of peace and order in our country."

Estrada had earlier said he may grant clemency if it was found that the three committed the crime because of poverty. He also said he would consult his spiritual adviser on what course to

take. However, he said on Monday that killing a law enforcer merited "heavy penalty."

"That is not a good example and we have to give a message to criminals that they will not be forgiven especially if the person they killed is a law enforcer," he said.

The Philippines carried out its first execution in 23 years when it put to death child rapist Leo Echegaray in February despite protests from rights groups and the influential Catholic church.

Justice Secretary Serafin Cuevas said everything was set for the execution of the three criminals at the national penitentiary but that they were also awaiting Estrada's decision.

Capital punishment was suspended by the 1987 constitution but a spate of sensational crimes prompted Congress to restore it.

Death toll from violence in Indonesia rises to 60

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — The number of people killed amid an outbreak of religious violence on two remote islands in eastern Indonesia rose Monday to 60 after more victim's bodies were found in burned out houses.

The official Antara news agency quoted local military sources as saying 20 badly charred corpses were recovered Monday in Larat, a village on Kai Besar island in Maluku province, once known as the spice islands.

More than 250 people have been killed and hundreds of houses and buildings burned in Maluku since bloody clashes first erupted between Christians and Muslims in January.

Fighting erupted on Dula island in the Kai islands group on Wednesday. The bloodshed spread to neighbouring Kai Besar island on Friday.

Antara quoted witnesses as saying the bodies had been burned beyond recognition.

But the local military chief, Lt. Col. Ery Susanto, said the situation in Larat was under control Monday.

"I have instructed military personnel posted in the village to evacuate and bury those bodies," Susanto was quoted as saying by Antara.

Two Christians were killed by Muslims in a separate clash on Sunday in Tual, the capital of southeast Maluku on Dula island, about 2,800 kilometres east of Jakarta.

Susanto said some villagers feared further outbreaks of violence and had armed themselves with swords, knives and other weapons despite calls for peace by officials.

He said the military wanted villagers to stay in their homes and not to attempt to leave their islands, adding that the navy would send several warships to the region to avert an exodus.

Boats that try to take people away would be stopped, Susanto said.

More than 13,000 people have already fled their homes for the shelter in government and military installations in Tual.

Antara said at least 200 children among the refugees there were suffering contagious diseases, including diarrhoea.

Indonesia is the world's most populous Islamic country.

Nearly 90 per cent of its 210 million people are Muslims.

However, Maluku has a large Christian population.

The violence in Maluku comes amid Indonesia's worst economic crisis in decades as well as political uncertainty that has followed the resignation of authoritarian President Suharto last May.

Rioting and lawlessness have hit many parts of Indonesia since Suharto stepped down after 32 years in power. Some fear that civil unrest could endanger plans to hold general elections in June.

Last month more than 200 people were killed in an ethnic fighting on the island of Borneo.

Reported that fresh violence had broken out there on Sunday and continued into Monday in the worst hit district of Sambas. Some 17 houses were set on fire, but there was no immediate report on casualties.

Six people killed by rebels in western Uganda over Easter

KAMPALA (AFP) — Six people were killed by Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) rebels in an attack in western Uganda over the Easter weekend, Ugandan newspapers reported here on Monday.

Some 30 rebels, armed with guns and machetes, attacked Hamukungu fishing village on the shores of Lake George in Kasese district, killing six people, including a policeman and his wife, and injuring two others, the reports said.

An unknown number of people were also abducted and shops and buildings destroyed during the Saturday night raid on the village, 23 kilometres from Kasese town.

Kasese district police commander Pius Matabazi told the independent Monitor newspaper that the military responded quickly, despite poor radio communication, as "the enemy had overpowered our police personnel plus the local defence units."

The attack came 10 days after ADF rebels attacked Kayembe Trading Centre in Kasese district, beheading three civilians and abducting four others, including a Roman Catholic priest.

Meanwhile, in a separate incident, the MP for

Buyungabo in western Uganda's Kabarole district, Adolf Mwesigye, was shot and injured in both legs by suspected ADF rebels on Saturday night as he travelled on the Fort-Portal to Kasese road.

The ADF, a coalition of the Tabligi Muslim group and former rebels of the moribund National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU), have been fighting since 1996 in an effort to destabilise the government of President Yoweri Museveni.

The rebels operate out of bases in the Ruwenzori Mountains, which straddle the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Uganda maintains that its current involvement in the conflict in the DRC — where it is backing rebels fighting to overthrow the government of DRC President Laurent Kabila — is justified because Kabila has been allowing the ADF rebels to operate out of bases in eastern DRC.

But despite Uganda's involvement in the DRC, there has been an upsurge in rebel activity in western Uganda since the start of the year, with over 60 civilians having lost their lives in rebel raids.

Nine Tamil rebels killed in Sri Lanka

COLOMBO (AP) — Government forces clashed with Tamil Tiger rebels using rockets and gunfire, killing at least nine rebels in northeastern Sri Lanka over the weekend, a military spokesman said Monday.

Four rebels were killed when the military destroyed a guerrilla bunker near Mankulam, 250 kilometres north of Colombo, on Sunday,

said major N.K. Wadugodapitiya, the military spokesman.

In another attack in the same area on Sunday, one rebel was killed and the military recovered nine anti-personnel mines from him, the spokesman said.

In Batticaloa, 220 kilometres east of Colombo, troops ambushed and killed two rebels and found two hand grenades

and a cyanide capsule.

Cadres of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam carry cyanide and swallow it to avoid being captured alive.

In another incident in Jaffna, 300 kilometres north of Colombo, troops fired at a group of rebel women cadres, killing two of them, Wadugodapitiya said.

The spokesman said there were no govern-

ment casualties.

The rebels are fighting for a separate homeland for minority Tamils, accusing majority Sinhalese of discrimination in education and jobs.

The government, which is controlled by the Sinhalese, denies the charge. More than 58,000 people have been killed in the 16-year-old ethnic conflict.

Jordan Times

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A shameful display

THE RECENT clashes between Muslims and Christians in Nazareth on Easter Sunday were a pathetic display of Arab solidarity, an affront to all those who aspire to a world of tolerance and a shame on both religions.

Theories that have been floating around, according to which Israeli authorities would be somehow directly or indirectly involved in the outbreak of the riots, offer neither excuse nor justification for what happened. Yet again, some chose to blame somebody else rather than searching for the truth and solving the problem by eliminating its causes.

But Sunday's clashes, in which 27 people were reportedly injured, also offer another proof — as if we needed it — of how short-sighted and narrow interests can jeopardise the development of entire communities.

The dispute is over whether a mosque to mark the grave of Salah Al Din's nephew or a public square for pilgrims to mark the start of Christianity's third Millennium should be built on the contested plot of land. The most likely result of this whole affair is that nothing at all will be built.

Nazareth, and indeed all the Palestinian territories and all Arab countries included in the pilgrims' routes, cannot be caught unprepared at the crucial appointment of the jubilee at the year 2,000, which certainly does not come unexpected. We have long watered our mouths in anticipation of hundreds of thousands of tourists streaming into our cities and archaeological sites. It is about time that we also start rolling up our sleeves.

Will we Arabs ever tire of fighting amongst ourselves?

How can we complain if we waste the few opportunities that come?

We are now fighting a battle to win international public opinion and portray our Arab Nation as a peaceful one, tolerant of our Jewish neighbours and content to live in a comprehensive and just peace with all faiths in the one holy land given us by God.

Our efforts are wasted ones when we show that we can't even live quietly with one another.

The irony is not lost, either, that Arabs condemn Serbia's atrocious aggression in Kosovo, but do not see the seeds of that same brutality in themselves. That is frightening.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Mahmoud Rimawi said His Majesty King Abdullah's current visit to Saudi Arabia indicates Jordan's inclination to give priority to inter-Arab relations regardless of political or geographical considerations. Arab "depth" is Jordan's strategic reserve for political and economic necessities, especially since the "90s experience" have proved that good Arab relations are irreplaceable, added Rimawi. The writer said the success of any Arab relations depends on strengthening the Arab "dimension," noting that the situation in the region is still difficult as all parties are seeking a comprehensive and just peace. In this regard, the visit is of special importance, because it clearly shows Jordan's priorities in the new era. The passing away of His Majesty King Hussein revealed the Kingdom's regional and international importance, said Rimawi, adding that similarly current developments in the region show how significant is the role of Saudi Arabia and thus the summit is extremely important.

Al Dustour's Abu Yazan said citizens usually do not pay attention to policy statements or care about examining promises given before Parliament as their confidence in the state's executive and legislative institutions is weak thanks to years of pledges that have not been met. The government of Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh will win people's confidence if it takes to court anyone important for corruption, or opens a complicated file, said Abu Yazan. Since the beginning of the democratic march ten years ago, all policy statements have promised to combat corruption, incompetence, poverty and unemployment as well as activate the economy. However, the results were often contrary to the goals, said the writer, who added that many have suggested to Rawabdeh that he should minimise the number of promises and maximise the work. But the statement was full of pledges and good intentions, and instead of making the statement short, as the press expected, it was long and full of details, said Abu Yazan, adding that the most important thing now is to translate policy into reality.

Heroism and tragedy in the policy statement

THE GOVERNMENT policy statement that Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh delivered to Parliament this week is epic in its scope and aspirations. Like all epics, however, it combines both heroism and tragedy.

The Rawabdeh government's policy statement is impressive because of its ambitious and sweeping aims, its sober identification of pressing national challenges, and its very positive tone of continued political liberalisation and democratisation. The prime minister did well to emphasise his government's desire to promote democratisation by expanding press freedoms and channels of dissent, enhancing dialogue with all political forces, and asserting the genuine independence of the judiciary.

Equally impressive was his plan to redress economic problems by improving the investment environment, increasing public sector efficiency and honesty, tackling poverty and unemployment, and maximising the benefits of privatisation. He also rightly stressed the urgency of solving our water problem, and reflected a new sense of seriousness and realism in this respect. Finally, I was struck by the vast, Olympian sweep of the government's goals, which target improvements in every known sector — from economy, politics, foreign affairs and education, through water, energy and environment, to women's rights, culture, and communications.

The government's frank acknowledgement of our urgent challenges, in the fields of economy, politics, and corruption, among others, is a refreshing change from the tendency to arrogance and head-in-the-sand Jordanian particularism by many recent governments. Recent stresses on our significant achievements shielded us from coming to grips with our real vulnerabilities and weaknesses.

However, the problematic side of the government's policy statement is a consequence of two points related to credibility and context.

First, the credibility problem: The policy statement is so vast and ambitious that it is also unrealistic. It is a fine expression of wishes and intent, but a poor guide to realistic achievements. Also, there is little new in this statement that has not been stated by previous governments, except certain points about the judiciary and women's equality. We have repeatedly heard all of these ambitions in recent decades, but seen few of them achieved. In fact, in many important areas that impact on the daily life and well-being of the average family, things seem to have deteriorated in the past decade concerning water, crime, poverty, corruption, employment, and public sector efficiency. For the Rawabdeh government to repeat a string of noble goals that it probably cannot achieve will only weaken the credibility of the government and

the Jordanian state, and increase the citizenry's scepticism about the role of the public sector.

Second, the issue of context: The government has offered a ringing roster of goals without sufficiently addressing the wider political and social contexts in which the government operates. The prime minister correctly mentioned the urgency of fighting corruption, implementing a meritocracy, and improving government efficiency. But he failed to say that in the meantime the average Jordanian citizen is growing more and more sceptical and cynical about the credibility of the public sector. One large reason for this is that while successive governments repeatedly promised to reduce corruption and increase public sector efficiency, the average citizen has encountered trends that seem to be moving in the opposite direction, save some notable exceptions like the impressively efficient passports and motor vehicle licensing departments.

A big reason why most citizens no longer believe the government's perpetual pledges to reduce corruption and abuse of power is that efforts to this end have been undertaken largely behind closed doors, without the public seeing or feeling the results that have been achieved. The Rawabdeh government will only exacerbate the problem, rather than relieve it, if its anti-corruption activity is so clandestine that it is also invisible to the average

View from the Fourth Circle



Rami G. Khouri

citizen. Consequently, I would urge this government to consider two small changes in its approach and style during the policy statement debate which concludes in Parliament this week.

First, the government should realistically choose two or three genuine priority goals from its panoramic list of aims, and pledge to the Jordanian people that it will exert maximum efforts to show progress in these areas. This would show real intent by the state, and rekindle some realistic hope for quality of life improvements by the citizenry. Let the government, in other words, provide us with a plausible checklist for its own accountability, through an open, transparent and democratic process of governance. Choosing two or three priority goals would help to transform public doubt into public confi-

dence.

Second, the government should make governance more public, by removing layers of secrecy that now cloud the public's trust. For example, if unregistered private water wells are such a significant cause of our water deficit, the government should publish the names of those people who operate these wells — after they are given reasonable time to register the wells and comply with the law. Or, if privatisation is so important for economic efficiency and reform, the government should consider publishing the names of all shareholders in those companies that are awarded concessions in former public operations, such as telecommunications and transport. Another possibility would be to make key government deliberations open to the public, in the form of public hearings by joint committees comprising the executive and legislative branches of government. Reforms such as these would simultaneously enhance those critical processes of governance — transparency, accountability, democracy — that are required to transform public doubt and concern into public trust and hope.

This prime minister and government are uniquely positioned to initiate such reforms, and to make them meaningful to the average citizen, instead of merely talking about them in an epic manner that combines heroism and tragedy in a perpetual modern drama of increasingly stressed statehood.



Mandate against the spectre of our past

By Robin Cook

AS I WRITE, Serb security forces and paramilitaries are conducting the most brutal campaign of terror against Kosovo Albanians. Men are being separated from their wives and children and then executed. Whole villages are being burned. Hundreds of thousands are being forced to flee their homes.

In the last war, Europe paid the price for despotism and ethnic hatred. After the war we said "never again." Yet some of the Serbian tactics are all too reminiscent of those dark days. President Milosevic's forces are conducting a systematic campaign of violence against a group of civilians purely on the basis of their ethnic identity. They are making a concerted attempt to rid a country of an entire community.

The actions of President Milosevic are a gross abuse of human rights. They are causing human suffering on a colossal scale. And they are an affront to everything for which modern Europe stands.

I come from a generation that was scarred by the evil of apartheid in Africa. Its dismantling was one of the great victories of recent years. We will not tolerate its re-emergence on our own doorstep. That is why we are acting in Kosovo. That is why we will see it through.

Milosevic's campaign of violent repression is nothing new. It did not start when NATO action began. Over the past year, long before the first NATO bombs dropped, Milosevic's forces had driven almost four hundred thousand people from their towns and villages. The latest round of brutality has swelled those numbers even further. It has become a tale of suffering on an unimaginable scale.

These grim statistics tell a terrible story. But everyone represents a life uprooted, a home lost, a childhood shattered, a livelihood abandoned. Every one represents a gross violation of human rights. Everyone is a stain on our continent, a reminder of the worst days of our past.

Some people are saying that our action has made things worse. This could not be more wrong. We have known for some time that Milosevic was planning a spring campaign against the people of Kosovo. That is why Britain — and her partners in the Contact Group — did everything possible to keep the peace process alive. It is why we repeatedly offered Milosevic the hand of peace, each time to have it rebuffed.

It is all too clear that he was never negotiating in good faith. He has never been interested in peace. While we were negotiating in Rambouillet and Paris, he was preparing a new wave of ethnic cleansing. That campaign has now begun, and we are seeing its terrible consequences.

Milosevic's tactic is now all too clear — to drive as many Albanians out of Kosovo as quickly as his forces can, by spreading terror through the civilian population. It is a tactic they used in the Bosnian war. And it is no coincidence that the same people who committed the worst atrocities in that war — like the notorious Serb commander "Arkan" — are now in Kosovo doing the same thing again.

We will not let Milosevic succeed. We cannot, if we want to have any genuine hope of building a peaceful, tolerant and diverse Europe. That is why we took the decision we did. And it is why we will not stop until Milosevic can no longer wage his campaign of repression. Any settlement must ensure that the victims of this tragedy — the Kosovo Albanians — can return safely to their homes and rebuild their shattered lives.

People say we should have opted for a peaceful solution. If only we could have done! We did everything we could to find that peaceful solution. We explored every avenue of dialogue. We accepted pledges and promises from Milosevic, only to see them betrayed.

He promised us last October that he would end the repression and reduce his troop levels in Kosovo. These proved to be empty words.

'[Apartheid's] dismantling was one of the great victories of recent years. We will not tolerate its re-emergence on our own doorstep. That is why we are acting in Kosovo'

By his actions, Milosevic gave us no choice. If we had not acted, Milosevic would then have been able to succeed in driving the Albanians out of Kosovo. We could not have stood aside, and wished his neighbours the best of luck, while Milosevic stoked ethnic conflict in the heart of Europe. We could not have stood aside as he reneged on his agreements with the international community, and waged his relentless campaign against the Kosovar Albanians. We could not have let a humanitarian catastrophe unfold on our doorstep.

We did not want to have to act. But we had no alternative. Not acting would have had a far graver cost — for the Kosovar Albanians, and for all the peoples of Europe. Through our actions, we are giving them the chance to escape our continent's darker past. We are giving them hope. We cannot weaken now.

The writer is British Foreign Secretary

Letters to the editor
Regarding the water dispute

THIS IS to congratulate Mr. Pascal Karmy on his Legal Notes, "Water dispute with Israel" (JT April 5). The Article, however, needs a few corrections that do not touch on the legal philosophy that Mr. Karmy has so eloquently displayed, but rather on the substance of the water shares as specified in the Treaty.

Paragraph 4 of Article VI in the body of the Treaty text reads: "... the Parties agree to search for ways to alleviate water shortages and to cooperate in the following fields:

c. Mutual assistance in the alleviation of water shortages"

This reference is meant to provide for "cooperation" between the two parties in mutually assisting each other in alleviating water shortage. Such cooperation can not be ruled out, but what should be ruled out is the unilateral declaration of intended actions.

The other part of my comment touches on the water due to Jordan from Israel thus far. It is composed of three portions, and is addressed in three distinct places in Annex II:

1 — The first portion is explicitly stipulated under Article I.2.a, whereby "Israel concedes to transfer to Jordan in the summer period — 15 May to 15 October of each year — 20 MCM of water from the Jordan River directly upstream from Dagan's gates." This provision has been honoured since June 1995 when the pipeline to transfer the water was built.

2 — The second portion is explicitly stipulated under Article I.2.d whereby "Israel will supply Jordan (10) MCM of Jordan River water from the same location in 2.a above, outside the summer period and during dates Jordan selects." This provision has also been honoured since June 1995.

3 — The third portion is stipulated under Article I.3 as the Legal Notes of Mr. Karmy mentions. The Article stipulates that "Jordan and Israel shall cooperate in finding sources for the supply to Jordan of an additional quantity of 50 MCM/year of water of drinkable standards." The implementation of this Article was somehow deferred until I forced the issue on 5 and 6 May 1997, and it was agreed in a Jordan-Israel Summit meeting on 8 May 1997 to have that flow come from desalination of brackish water flowing into the Jordan River from the Israeli side. It was concurrently agreed that, until the desalination plant is up and operational, Israel will supply an annual average of between 25 and 30 MCM from Lake Tiberias. This translates into about 2.5 MCM per month, and the summer period of five months will witness the flow of 12.5 MCM.

Therefore, the annual dues to Jordan from Lake Tiberias run currently at between 55 and 60 MCM, of which 32.5 MCM are due in the five dry months between 15 May and 15 October of each year, and the rest (22.5-27.5 MCM) are due during the rest of each year. This is not quite identical with the 50 MCM share that Mr. Karmy thought is Jordan's share from Israel.

It is to be noted that the announcement was made in Israel by the Water Commissioner, Mr. Meir Ben Meir, who is a very knowledgeable and well-respected professional. He is also the head of the Israeli side in the Joint water Committee formed under Article VII of the Water Annex. However, no formal announcement was made by the Israeli cabinet, prime minister or the minister of national infrastructure. As such, I do not take the announcement as a formal position of the government of Israel with whom the Treaty was concluded. In our legal system, the Treaty was put into law, and the last Article of that law says, "the prime minister and the ministers are authorised to implement the provisions of this law." In a likewise format, unless we hear from the Israeli cabinet, it would be premature to conclude that the Water Commissioner's announcement regarding the reduction of Jordan's water share is the position of the government of Israel.

Dr. Munther J Haddadin
Amman

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any issue they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication should contain the writer's full name and preferably address. Names can be withheld upon request but only in special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing and abridging.

Deadly rubber bullets tell no tales

By Neve Gordon

"LULU CAME home from school at about 3 o'clock," her father said as he began relating the tragic story. "She asked for money and set off to buy ice-cream with a friend. The streets were quiet, there were no demonstrations or disturbances in the area — just a regular day in the refugee camp. Suddenly we heard the sound of gunfire. A few minutes later her friend ran into our house, the ice-cream still dripping in her hand: she was crying 'Lulu's dead, Lulu's dead.'"

Mohammed stopped for a moment before he continued: "Only later we learned that Israeli soldiers had emerged from a side alley, and when the scared children started running, the soldiers fired."

Six-year-old Lulu Abu Dahi was struck in the head by a rubber bullet and sustained an open wound with protruding brain tissue in the right frontal region of the cranium. She was rushed unconscious in a private car from Shabura Refugee Camp to Nasser Hospital, Khan Younis. No one in the dilapidated hospital could

treat her, and after receiving first aid, she was transferred to Tel-Hashomer medical centre, Israel. A month later the bullet was successfully removed by craniotomy. Lulu had suffered massive damage to both the left and right sides of her brain and was left totally paralysed.

No investigation was conducted following Lulu's injury. Only when the Abu Dahi family demanded an inquest, two years after the shooting, did the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) agree to investigate the incident. Six months later the family's lawyer was informed that, "The investigation by the Military Police was initiated following your request. As the complaint was filed about two-and-a-half years after the event, it was impossible to locate most of the material relevant to the activities of IDF forces on the relevant date. We have accordingly ordered that the file be closed."

Five years ago I visited Lulu at the Arab Society Rehabilitation Centre in Beit Jallah, near Bethlehem. At the time I was the director of Physicians for Human Rights, Israel, and we were working on a report about

intifada-related head injuries. Lulu was 10 years old when I saw her, and was totally unaware of her surroundings. The neurological report described her as being "vegetative — when spoken to in her language, responds with crying only..."

In 1995 Lulu was returned to her parents' home in Shabura Camp; neither the Israeli nor Palestinian authorities were willing to pay the bill at the rehabilitation centre. Two months ago Lulu died, about 10 years after she was shot and just one day before her 16th birthday.

Coincidentally, a week after her death the Israeli human rights organisation B'tselem published a report discussing rubber bullets. According to the report, the IDF uses rubber bullets — which are made of zinc and merely wrapped by a thin layer of rubber — because they are considered to be less lethal than regular bullets. The report indicates, however, that since January 1988 at least 58 Palestinians have been killed by rubber bullets. Of these, 28 were children under the age of 17, and 13 of them were under the age of 13. Lulu can now be added to the statis-

Unlike regular bullets which can be traced to a specific gun, the origin of a 'rubber' slug cannot be determined; consequently there is no way to ascertain who shot the fatal bullet

tic. The report does not mention how many people were wounded by the "less lethal" bullet, but one can imagine that the number is the hundreds.

Barely a month passed after the report's publication when yet another Palestinian fell victim to a rubber bullet. It was January 26, 1999, and the bulldozers had already arrived at the East Jerusalem village of Issawiye, a few minutes' walk from my apartment. Ahmad and Issa Abu Awais' house, which had been built three years earlier and was home to 14 people, was slated to be demolished.

Demolition is one of Israel's draconian policies towards Palestinians that has not changed since the signing of the Oslo agreements in 1993: it has reduced to rubble more than 500 houses in the past five years. The village's residents did not intend to let the Israeli authorities implement the policy without resistance and had gathered around the house in order to protest against the demolition. By firing tear gas and rubber bullets Israeli soldiers dispersed the protesters, blazing the way for the bulldozers. In the process, at least five people were injured, among them 22-year-old Zaki Noor Abeid, who was hit in the head by a rubber bullet. Zaki died in

Hadassah hospital three days later, the same day as the house was demolished. Footage shown on Israeli TV and a preliminary inquiry verified that scores of Israeli soldiers had recklessly shot at the protesters. Yet the investigative team has already notified the public that no one will be tried for manslaughter. Unlike regular bullets which can be traced to a specific gun, the origin of a "rubber" slug cannot be determined; consequently there is no way to ascertain who shot the fatal bullet.

While I do believe that the person who pulled the trigger must pay the price, one should keep in mind that the soldier, like the rubber coating to the bullet, is but a bolt in a well-oiled machine. Indeed, the killing and oppression of Palestinians will not end by removing this or that soldier from duty, or by replacing regular bullets with rubber ones, but only by terminating the occupation. In spite of what people are told, it is obvious to those who live in this region that in many ways the occupation still persists.

— The Guardian

Iraq: The water tragedy

By Christine Aziz

THE EUPHRATES river sprang from the Paradise of the Old Testament and also watered one of the Seven Wonders of the World, the Hanging Gardens of ancient Babylon. According to classical Greek writers, streams of water emerged from elevated sources to flow down sloping channels that watered the entire Garden.

The Euphrates is an ancient and historic river serving as the primary trade route from India to the Mediterranean sea. It is also the site of one of the world's earliest and most important civilisations — Mesopotamia — located on the grasslands between the Euphrates and its sister river, the Tigris. Time has bulldozed the famous Hanging Gardens, and Babylon and Mesopotamia are now part of modern-day Iraq, but the Euphrates and Tigris rivers still have romantic and biblical associations. However, the

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate: "...and We made from water everything alive..."

— 'The Prophets', Verse 30, The Koran

reality is far from romantic.

Originating from Turkey and flowing through Syria and Iraq, the Euphrates river joins the Tigris in Iraq and becomes the Shatt Al Arab waterway. The Tigris river, originating from Lake Hazar, becomes the border between Turkey and Syria for a distance of 40 kilometres entering Iraq and joining the Euphrates.

Ever since man settled in these regions, the two rivers have been the major sources of drinking water for both inhabitants and livestock and have irrigated surrounding agricultural lands. Mesopotamia was probably the first region of the world where humans gained mastery over major rivers. Irrigation and flood protection were vital to farmers who fed the inhabitants of the world's first-known cities built in Mesopotamia more than 5,000 years ago. This was generally a matter as simple as the element's formula of H₂O, until the complex world of the 20th century developed, with its fast-growing populations and increased demand for water. Iraq's solution was to invest in highly sophisticated water-treatment and pumping facilities, thus creating a dependency on imported technology and engineering skills. Prior to the Gulf War, the

country was in the process of updating its water system and had begun constructing new treatment plants to replace outdated plants built in the '50s and '60s. It was an expensive solution, but money was no obstacle for one of the richest oil-producing countries in the world — until 1990.

The Gulf War severely damaged Iraq's infrastructure, interrupting the power supply and consequently the operation of pumping and treatment facilities. The new plants remained nothing more than incomplete dreams. Within a matter of weeks an "emergency" without precedent was created, with millions of people lacking safe drinking water. The imposition of sanctions by the United Nations in 1990 meant that the situation could only get worse, artificially prolonging the effects of war.

The task that confronted the humanitarian agencies in Iraq was daunting. Raw sewage spilled into major rivers. In Baghdad both sewage and treatment plants for the city ground to a halt during the first week of the Gulf War for want of electricity. In 1991, a Harvard study team reported that at least twice as many children were being admitted to hospitals with gastroenteritis as before the war, and of these twice as many died. Typhoid and cholera became epidemic. A vicious cycle had been created that has not yet been broken; most Iraqis lack the resources to ensure a proper diet for themselves and their families despite government subsidies, thus making them vulnerable to diseases carried in contaminated drinking water, which in turn are difficult to treat because of the ongoing scarcity of drugs and equipment. In 1989, approximately five per cent of water in Iraq was found to be contaminated. By 1996 this figure had risen to 35 per cent.

Lack of drinking water immediately after the war was the direct result of electricity shortages and the situation is getting worse. The low availability of power — averaging 50 per cent in rural areas — is severely affecting food production. Frequent cuts and unstable supply place additional strain on the installed electrical equipment, leading to premature deterioration. A recent U.N. statement observed that a staggering \$10 billion would be needed to re-establish electricity — far beyond the means of U.N. Resolution 986.

"Looking at water alone does not give the full picture," stressed Jost Widmer, an ICRC water and sanitation engineer based in Baghdad. "The water industry is entirely dependent on electricity. It is difficult to return to the standards that were set before the Gulf War, even though actual damage to the water facilities was very limited, because of the lack of power."

The ICRC's emergency water programme, shared with a number of humanitarian agencies, began in Baghdad and was extended to several towns in the provinces, later expanding to rural areas. Faris A.



Asam, section director of the Baghdad Water Authority, succinctly outlines the practical difficulties that are constantly encountered, regardless of good intentions and the careful planning of long, medium, and short-term objectives. "The Karkh water treatment plant provides drinking water to 70 per cent of Baghdad's population... production conditions are far from ideal and everyday we run up against a number of problems, the main one being how to obtain sufficient spare parts. Then there is the problem of purity of our chemicals: the ones we use to purify the water contain around 30 times more impurities than before the embargo, and this damages the alum and chlorine dosing equipment which subsequently requires more maintenance. Another huge headache is that of sewage plants: we do not have the funds to maintain them properly. The effluent produced is contaminated and should not be in the river: so the quality of the water downstream from Baghdad is really bad. You have to see the whole water-treatment process as a continuous one: if one link in the chain breaks, the whole thing breaks down."

A 1997 UNICEF/government of Iraq survey on the availability of water and sewage systems reported that more than half of the rural population did not have adequate access to potable water, while for sewage disposal, some 30 per cent of the total population, predominantly in the rural areas, were without adequate services. Much of the waste is discharged directly into rivers and streams, so that much of the supplied water is contaminated or below acceptable standards.

According to Professor Tony Allan,

a Middle East water expert at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, the nature of a country's water policy prior to war will determine to some extent the problems that follow. "The weakness of the Iraqi position with respect to its use of land and water was expressed in 1990. By then it was importing 90 per cent of its food and not using its water wealth to secure food security."

Suddenly, Iraq was faced with an urgent need to produce its own food. Surely with so much water around this would not be difficult? Allan points out otherwise. "The misconception of the lowlands of the Tigris, for example, is that if there were to be sufficient water it would be easy to develop productive agriculture. In fact, the soils of both Syria and Iraq are poor and very expensive to reclaim for irrigated agriculture. Both countries spent huge sums in the '70s and '80s on trying to reclaim land without success. The incentive now for Iraq in the present crisis is much higher and it is likely that in the present stressful circumstances, more progress will be made in land reclamation and increasing productivity of both land and water."

An FAO/WFP Food Supply and Nutrition Assessment Mission to Iraq reported that an estimated 2.76 million hectares were planted with cereals in 1997 — some 13 per cent lower than in 1995 (previously the lowest year since 1991). The mission also observed large unplanted areas in central and southern regions, particularly in the Al-Kut area, where some 300,000 hectares of previously reclaimed, cultivated land have been abandoned owing to rising soil salinity and lack of irrigation water, farm

machinery and inputs such as fuel and fertilisers. Increasingly, the tendency to food production has led to competition between the legitimate needs of agriculture and the supply of drinking water. "We very often have to see the government's Irrigation Department and we all have to fight to get what each water sector needs," Widmer said. "And its getting worse because of the electricity shortages combined with manpower shortages and lack of funds."

A massive rationing programme provided by the government of Iraq has prevented widespread malnutrition and starvation and reflects a policy that one foreign aid worker referred to as "the government will do it for you" attitude. This can lead to difficulties for programmes that require a certain amount of initiative and independence. "There is an attitude prevalent in the Middle East that the government will do it for you, and that replace is better than repair," observed Yvonne Klynman, Programme Officer in Iraq for CARE International. "Agencies like ours cannot overcome this."

Its a long battle in these water projects to try and get across to the engineers that maintenance is better than replacing and that they don't have to have someone standing over them telling them what to do."

In 1994 CARE stopped working in the north of Iraq to concentrate on the south where the need appeared to be greater. The shift led to a greater focus on self-help within the community. The agency already has an established record in the rehabilitation of water-treatment plants, but sees increasing value in working in schools and directly with the community. In conjunction with UNICEF, it is carrying out an integrated water project which works through the local People's Council in order to involve residents in the maintenance of rehabilitated sites and is working in 50 schools. "The focus here is on latrines and drinking water," Klynman said. "We are developing integrated projects in which we principally improve the sanitary conditions in schools and health clinics. You can't teach children who are constantly being ill because of sub-standard water."

Money, which once flowed as fast and as free as the Euphrates in Iraq, is now as valuable a commodity as water. Restrictions on the sale of Iraqi oil and the freezing of the country's assets has meant that any rehabilitation is dependent on the generosity of donors. "The problem is that Iraq's water problem does not have the same appeal as Africa for example. Most people in Baghdad have water piped into their homes and this does not have the same appeal to donors as village pumps," Klynman said. The oil-for-food agreement also led to the mistaken

belief that the Iraqis are no longer suffering and in need.

There are many factors in Iraq that affect attempts to bring water to domestic taps and agricultural land. Most are related to the events of the last eight years, but other factors operate regardless of war and sanctions. Population growth has increased the demand for water. Since the Gulf war the population has risen from around 17 million to 22.9 million. "The Middle East has had to cope with rapidly rising populations since the middle of the 20th century and Iraq is no exception," Professor Allan said. "When Iraq was oil rich, this increase was not a significant challenge. With the new economic restraints of the 1990s, the demographic challenge has been very serious because food importing and infrastructural developments are no longer possible."

The steady rise in Iraq's population is unlikely to be constrained, President Saddam Hussein's last known

'It's a long battle in these water projects to try and get across to the engineers that maintenance is better than replacing and that they don't have to have someone standing over them telling them what to do'

edict on family planning was made in the '80s and emphasised spacing of children, rather than the promotion of smaller families.

Another factor which remains on the sidelines for the time being is the sharing of the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates between Turkey, Syria and Iraq. This is a cause of tension between the three countries which continues to simmer.

Irrespective of the wider political implications, individuals like the ICRC's Widmer have to confront the problems of water in Iraq on a daily basis. Going to the heart of the matter, he said, "Our water and sanitation team should not have to be here at all."

The writer is a freelance journalist based in the U.K., where she is a regular contributor to British newspapers and magazines. She specialises in humanitarian issues, particularly those concerning women, and has reported from Africa, Afghanistan, Iraq and India. She has contributed to The Afghan Handbook, published by the International Centre for Humanitarian Reporting.

— Forum

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Jordan Dairy Company to distribute dividends at a rate of 25 per cent

**** THE GENERAL** assembly of the Jordan Dairy Company has approved the recommendation of the board of directors to distribute JD438,000 in dividends at a rate of 25 per cent after the annual report was presented to the shareholders at an ordinary meeting. According to the report, the company generated JD757,400 in net profit last year.

Board Chairman Ahmad Mufleh Horani told the shareholders that sales amounted to JD6.3 million in 1998 compared to JD7.1 million during 1997 but he described the financial results as good pointing out that total assets at the end of 1998 stood at JD4.4 million (JD4.2 million in 1997) and that shareholders equity rose slightly to JD2.7 million (JD2.6 million in 1997).

"The company's policy focuses on quality and not to oversupply the markets with additional products at lower prices to avoid lowering the quality level," Horani said noting that the net

profit achieved was despite stiff competition in the local market. Vice Chairman and Director General Nimer Hammad said the company continued to diversify its activities and to raise its production as well as conducting the necessary improvements to maintain quality and support sales in the local market. "The company developed and improved its operations by buying two machines that had the capacity to fill between six thousand and eight thousand packs of yoghurt and lebanese an hour in addition to another machine for automatically packing the triangular-shaped processed cheese," Hammad added.

The annual report showed that the company produced 6,862 tonnes of pasteurised milk and dairy, 672 tonnes of various types of cheese and 82 tonnes of other products. In 1997, the company produced 7,598 tonnes of pasteurised milk and dairy, 881 tonnes of various types of cheese and 247 tonnes of other products.

Number of companies entering business shoots up in March

**** A RECORD** of 409 trade, industrial and contracting firms were set up in last month, a trade ministry report said on Monday. The report said the blossoming of companies — more than four times the number created in either January or February — showed confidence in business activity. The company directors were encouraged by the financial and political support shown by Arab Gulf and North

African states after the death of King Hussein in February.

The new companies have a total capital of JD6.8 million (\$9.6 million), the report said. Most of them are trading firms. The companies' produce or deal in medical goods, vegetable oil, bricks, marble, plaster, rubber, iron, batteries, mineral water, tobacco, textile, perfume, tents and furniture.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR TUESDAY, APRIL 6, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) It's a good day to make a decision about what you want to do for the next few years. Do you want to stay where you are, or is it time for you to move on to the next level? If more education will be required, invest in that now.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Be careful following a friend's advice today. It could be based more on fear than on common sense. There's no point in letting somebody else's anxiety slow you down. You're cautious enough already. Instead, be bold, and follow your own inner voice to make a wise decision.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Your partner is giving you a hard time, but it's probably for your own good. You're learning something important. Might as well look at it that way. Might as well take a few notes, too, because this is a lesson you'll find easy to forget.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) There's a good opportunity to make money today, but it might seem to be pushing you in the wrong direction. You've got an idea about where you'd like to go, and this seems to be off track. Don't make too hasty a judgement, however. Today, empower your flair for adventure, rather than your worries.

LEO: (July 23 to August 22) You should be in an absolutely fabulous mood today, and it looks like everything is going your way. Don't get too pushy or too assertive, however. You could hurt an older person's feelings without even meaning to. Remember to be respectful as well as bold, and you'll do just fine.

VIRGO: (August 23 to September 22) Looks like a household project could take precedence today over something you'd rather be doing. Instead of complaining, use this as a learning experience. Apply information you've recently acquired to help build something you need. That could save you time as well as money. Besides, it'll be good exercise.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Although you're pretty lucky again today, you're also slightly inhibited. You can't have everything you want exactly the way you want it, but you might be able to get quite a lot of other things going your way. Consider this all part of your education. You might even be able to deduct some of the expenses.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You could make quite a bit of money today by providing a service for somebody else. Looks like you have talents this other person lacks, and if you look around, you should be able to figure out who it is and what he or she needs. Develop this skill, by the way, and you'll always have plenty of money.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) There are those who would advise you to proceed with caution, but what for? You can see what you want, and it's pretty close to being reality. There are just a few odds and ends to take care of. Make sure you do a good job on those and everything else will fall neatly into place, just the way you want it.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 19) Others are going full speed ahead, but you're still holding back a little. That's because you're busy figuring the numbers in your head. If there's not going to be quite enough to go around, don't jump on the bandwagon. Let the others take a risk while you stick with a sure thing.

AQUARIUS: (January 20 to February 18) The good news is that you're lucky. You're learning fast and you're being effective, trying new tricks and winning with them. The bad news, or maybe its more good news, is that there's a challenge. Have at it.

PISCES: (February 19 to March 20) If you've laid the groundwork already, you could be quite successful today. It's important for you to have the facts at your fingertips, however. That way, you'll be able to provide them to the person who needs them quickly, and that could lead to an increase in your income. So, go for it.

Birthstone of April: Diamond — Amethyst

Despite higher circulation of cheques those returned by banks edge up slightly

By Suha Ma'ayeh

AMMAN — With the increase in the circulation of cheques, the issuance of bad cheques have slightly increased last year, compared to 1997, according to recent Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) figures. Figures showed a total of 44,799 cheques worth

JD42.7 million were returned for non-payment in 1998 compared to 38,324 cheques worth JD36.2 million in 1997.

CBJ figures indicated that cheques which bounced for the lack of funds in 1998 amounted to JD24.0 million while in 1997 they registered a value of JD21.8 million.

"If you compare the number of bounced cheques due to the lack of funds to the total circulation, then it is a positive indicator," said Ahmed Abdul Fatah, CBJ deputy governor.

CBJ figures showed that a total of 734,970 cheques worth JD934.5 million circulated in 1998 compared to 717,625 cheques valued at JD902.3 million in 1997. The ratio of bounced cheques circulated for lack of funds was the same for 1998 as for 1996 at 0.026. In 1997 the ratio was 0.024.

Dawood Musa, deputy manager at the Arab Bank administration said public awareness and enforcement of penalties have lowered

the number of bounced cheques.

"The fact that the bank started applying automation in encoding cheques has helped decrease bounced cheques," Musa told the Jordan Times.

"Cheques that do not meet the specifications of the electronic clearance bounce, that's why the number of cheques that bounce because of technical reasons have increased," he added.

CBJ figures showed that the value of bounced cheques due to other reasons stood at a value of JD18.8 million last year while in 1997 they registered JD14.4 million.

Such cheques are often

returned for lack of signatures and mistakes in filling out the amounts of cheques, said Abdul Fatah.

Khalid Awad, marketing officer of HSBC British Bank, said bounced cheques never reflect a healthy indicator in a [market economy].

"Bounced cheques negatively impact the industry," he stressed while comparing the industry to a chain. "If one breaks loose then the whole chain breaks."

"The fact the circulation has increased is a healthy sign, but it doesn't mean that the country is progressing," Awad added. "Bad cheques must remain under strict control."

A.S.E TRADE ACCESS 4848888 Monday, 05-04-99			
BANKS			
ARAB BK	215.000	214.500	-0.23%
BC OF JORDAN	1.280	1.280	+0.00%
THE HOUSING BK	2.840	2.830	-0.35%
JO. TRADING BK	1.860	1.850	-0.54%
JO. INVESTMENT BK	1.320	1.320	0.00%
PRINCE ALADIB BK	0.810	0.810	0.00%
BANKS INDEX	280.380	POINT +	-0.18%
INSURANCE			
JO. GULF INS	1.800	1.800	-5.28%
INSURANCE INDEX	123.830	POINT +	-0.52%
SERVICES			
ELECTRIC POWER	1.840	1.840	0.00%
PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	1.800	1.800	0.00%
JO. INT'L TRADING CENT	0.280	0.270	-3.57%
AL-KHAYAT	7.580	7.400	-2.37%
COMMODITIES	1.080	1.080	0.00%
ARAB INT'L FOR INVESTMENT	1.820	1.820	0.00%
UNIFIED LAND TRANS	1.080	1.080	+0.93%
SERVICES INDEX	111.930	POINT +	+0.11%
INDUSTRY			
CEMENT	2.590	2.520	-2.70%
PHOSPHATE	2.320	2.330	+0.43%
PETROLEUM REFINERY	10.870	10.880	+0.09%
JO. YANINING	6.500	6.500	0.00%
THE IND. COMMER. ASSOCIATION	1.030	1.020	-0.97%
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL	2.980	3.040	+1.67%
CHROMIUM IND	1.280	1.280	0.00%
TOBACCO & CIGARETTE	1.430	1.430	0.00%
JO. PIPES	1.000	0.980	-2.00%
INT'L STEEL	0.810	0.780	-3.70%
DAR AL DAWA	6.100	6.100	0.00%
MIDDLE EAST COMPLEX	0.880	0.870	-1.14%
JO. STEEL	1.080	1.010	-6.48%
ARAB ALUMINIUM	1.710	1.700	-0.58%
UNIVERSAL CHEMICAL	0.880	0.880	0.00%
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	0.380	0.380	0.00%
UNIVERSAL CHEMICAL	0.870	0.880	+1.15%
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Syrians wary of putting foreign currency in local banks

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Ordinary Syrians "lack confidence" in local banks and hesitate to keep foreign currency in them, the government daily Tishrin said Monday.

Both the number of foreign currency accounts and the amount of money kept in them has fallen since the end of 1998, the paper said. "This drop shows people have little confidence in our banks," it commented.

The amount of foreign currency held in the banks has gone down by half a million dollars since the end of last year to stand at six million, while the number of account holders has fallen from 3,574 to 2,597 in the same period.

The paper also attributed people's caution to a law which sets prison terms of between three and ten years for dealing in foreign currency.

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Jordan's Odeh tops list of Asian All-Star team

By a Staff Reporter

AMMAN — After one month of balloting following his nomination by the Asian Basketball Confederation (ABC) for the 3rd Asian All-Star Extravaganza, Al Jazireh's star centre Ma'en Odeh now tops the list for the 1999 All-Star match due to be held in Guangzhou, China in October.

The 22-year-old forward was the only Jordanian player to have been nominated among 20 others by a special ABC panel after his strong showing at the Asian Championship which was held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia last year where Jordan finished seventh.

An ABC press release headlined 'Jordanian (no, not Michael Jordan) tops the list' stated: 'An unheralded big man is moving up the ranks as Asia's most popular player. Ma'en Odeh, Jordan's 205 cm power forward, has tallied 5 times more votes than any other player in Asia so far.'

Odeh also seems to have left an impressive mark as a member of the Arab All-star team in Lebanon last October where he was top rebounder and scorer among the Arab World's

top players.

'He has displayed a soft touch from outside and deadly power inside. His former national teammate Samir Murqos exclaimed: 'I've known Ma'en for 3 years. He has proved to be the best center in Jordan. Ma'en has exceptional height, and he performs beautiful skills when he is on the court. He is liked by all. He is a stubborn defender and a first-class shooter.'

The second highest vote-getter so far is Chinese Taipei's Cheng Chih-lung.

Odeh is one of five Arab players short-listed among 21 top stars for the final Asian All-Star extravaganza of the 20th century to be staged from Oct. 8-10.

'It's an honour for me to be named among the top 21 players in Asia. Being nominated for the team is also an honour as a Jordanian. I hope I'll be among the 12 players chosen, as I'll be representing the Kingdom,' said told the Jordan Times after he was nominated.

Other Arab players nominated are Majed Ali of Bahrain, Yassin Mahmoud of Qatar, Fadi Al Khatib of

Lebanon and compatriot NBA star Rony Seikaly a former Miami Heat player now with the New Jersey Nets.

Odeh put his name on the map of Jordanian basketball after he led the Kingdom's Under-18 national team to the World Youth Championship in 1995 after scoring the winning basket against the Philippines at the Asian Junior Championship where Jordan won the bronze medal.

His teammate, Zeid Alkhas, twice played on the Asian All-Star team after being nominated by the Jordan Basketball Federation to be on the lineup.

The nominated players this year include 5 from Japan, 6 from South Korea, 2 from Taipei, 1 each from Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand.

Odeh has been a member of the men's national team since the Pan-Arab Games in 1997. He now trains twice a day five times a week with the team preparing for the Pan-Arab Games.



Indiana Pacers centre Rik Smits (R) shoots over New York Knicks centre Patrick Ewing (L) during first quarter play at Market Square Arena in Indianapolis, IN. (AFP photo)

Rockies bury Padres as Major League season opens in Mexico

MONTERREY, Mexico (AFP) — The Colorado Rockies won the first major league season opener ever played in Mexico Sunday, burying the National League champion San Diego Padres 8-2.

The historic game in Estadio Monterrey marked the first time baseball launched its season with a game outside the United States and Canada.

An overflow crowd saw the Rockies crush the Padres as Dante Bichette went 4-for-5 with a home run and four RBI for Colorado.

Not long after capturing the second National League pennant in team history, San Diego unloaded several key players in an effort to reduce salary. Gone are the right-hander Kevin Brown, former NL MVP Ken Caminiti, 50-homer slugger Greg Vaughn and outfielder Steve Finley.

With Brown signing with the Los Angeles Dodgers for a record \$105 million over seven years, Andy Ashby got the opening night start for the Padres. He did not survive the second inning, allowing six runs and eight hits with two walks and two strikeouts. Ashby (0-1) retired only three batters while throwing 45 pitches in his second career season-opening assignment.

Todd Helton was the only Rockies starter without a hit, as even pitcher Darryl Kile went 2-for-2. Vinny Castilla, a native of Oaxaca who spent three seasons in the Mexican League, also had four hits.

The win made manager Jim Leyland's Colorado debut a successful one. On Monday, attention will again turn to the north as Brown makes his Dodgers debut against Randy Johnson, who begins his tenure with the Arizona Diamondbacks after bolting the Houston Astros for a four-year, \$53 million deal.

'The Big Unit against Kevin Brown — now that's a way to start a season,' said Dodgers manager Davey Johnson, who returns to baseball after a one-year sabbatical.

In Oakland, Roger Clemens pitches his first game for the World Series champion New York Yankees, who landed the five-time Cy Young Award winner from Toronto in one of the biggest trades in baseball history.

While pitchers will again be in the spotlight, the focus on Monday will also be on St. Louis first baseman Mark McGwire, who electrified the country last season by hitting 70 homers and winning his epic race with Sammy Sosa of the Chicago Cubs for one of the most revered records in baseball.

McGwire homered on opening day last season and will try to do the same when he faces left-hander Rafael Roque of the Milwaukee Brewers.

Sosa doesn't begin his season until Tuesday, when the Cubs visit the defending NL Central champion Astros.

Well-rested Marseille eye 3rd ever European final

PARIS (AFP) — A well-rested and in-form Marseille meet Bologna in the UEFA Cup semifinal at the Stade Velodrome on Tuesday with only its third ever European club final in its sights and revenge on their minds after the Italian outfit eliminated fellow French side Lyon in the quarter-finals.

Marseille coach Roland Courbis rested internationalists Laurent Blanc and Christophe Dugary for their 2-1 win at Monaco on Friday, and Robert Pires, who also played for France against Armenia last Wednesday, only played a half.

Marseille should be fresh and ready for this tie, which is one step away from the glory days of their European Cup final appearances in 1991 and 1993.

Courbis, who said he expected a very close match, said they would field their usual attacking line-up of three forwards in Dugary, Fabrizio Ravanelli and Florian Maurice, with Pires in a playmakers role just behind.

In the other semi-final, Atletico Madrid host Parma and Atletico's new Serbian coach Radomir Antic, who led the side to the 1996 Spanish league and cup double, might be forgiven for having his mind elsewhere with the current problems in Yugoslavia.

Atletico, languishing in midtable in Spain, earned a useful 1-1 draw at Deportivo La Coruna on Saturday night in their last match before European club action resumes.

Dugary said he expected Bologna to defend for a full 90 minutes and try and turn the match into a dull stalemate. 'We need to make sure we score a few goals to ease the pressure in the second leg,' Dugary said.

He added Marseille would try to keep striker Giuseppe Signori quiet, win the midfield battle, and then convert the few

chances that come their way. 'It'll be a tight match but we can win it,' Dugary added.

However, 30-year-old Signori, who has scored 14 goals in the Italian championship, hurt his left knee in training last Tuesday and is a doubt for the fixture.

Courbis has plenty of options in midfield with four players for two places in Frederic Brando, Daniel Bravo, who won the 1996 Cup Winners Cup with Paris Saint Germain, Peter Luccin and Eric Roy. Both Brando and Bravo played

Czech Radek Bejbl.

Atletico will have to beware of the striking duo of Argentinian Hernan Crespo and Italian international Enrico Chiesa as Parma look to repeat their 1995 UEFA Cup win.

Crespo has scored 16 goals in the Italian league and Chiesa has fired in nine while they have scored eight of Parma's 17 in the UEFA Cup this season.

Parma will be going into the tie with their team in good shape physically but with their morale severely dented after Saturday's

UEFA SEMIFINALS

very well at Monaco and might have earned their places.

In defence only Patrick Blondeau is out with tendinitis in his knee and he is expected to return on April 15 in their league game against Nancy.

Marseille will have to be careful on the yellow card front as six players have already had one booking in the competition — South African Pierre Issa, Dugary, Blanc, Luccin, Ravanelli and William Gallas.

Atletico's chances of reaching the May 12 final in Moscow rest heavily on the shoulders of Antic, who left last June but is now back and is expected to give the club a new lease of life since the sacking of Arrigo Sacchi.

Against Parma, Antic has the skill of Brazilian Juninho at his disposal, but three expected absentees will weigh heavily on the side — playmaker Francisco Kiko, Uruguayan striker Fernando Correa and

surprise 1-1 draw with Cagliari all but ended their hopes of becoming Italian champions.

Coach Alberto Malesani admitted his team are going through a hard time.

'We had three matches and we aimed to come away with nine points — instead we only got four. That's very few indeed if you want to challenge for the title,' he said.

'It's a drop in performance which is very annoying because it's not physical and it's not technical or tactical. Now we just have to believe we can turn this situation around,' he added.

Malesani has two strengths and one weakness as he prepares the team for the tie in Madrid: the strengths being Crespo and Chiesa; the weakness is the suspension of star defender Fabio Cannavaro, following a booking during their 6-0 demolition of French club Bordeaux in the second leg of the quarter-final.

Tuesday's Schedule
UEFA Cup semi-final, first leg matches

• Marseille (Fra) vs. Bologna (Ita)
• Atletico Madrid (Spa) vs. Parma (Ita)

Injured Christie pulls out of Stawell Gift

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Former Olympic champion Linford Christie pulled out of Australia's Stawell Gift with a hamstring injury Monday.

The British sprinter was due to run in the semi-finals of the Easter sprint handicap but suffered a back-related hamstring injury after his two races Sunday.

Christie felt his back seize, was restricted in his movement and decided, on medical advice, not to run in the semis.

He felt pain after the heat but decided to run in the repechage with painkillers to avoid disappointing his fans.

He finished second in the repechage to gain entry to the semis but further inflamed the injury.

His physiotherapist Karen Stephens said Christie felt pins and needles in his right leg, indicating irritation of a nerve.

'I advised him to obtain further treatment including traction and that a CT scan may be advised to prevent worsening of his symptoms,' Stephens said.

'It would be best that treatment starts as soon as possible,' she said. Christie said it was a great disappointment to be forced out through injury as he had thoroughly enjoyed his time at the Stawell Gift, held in rural Victoria state.

'No athlete likes to be injured and I am extremely disappointed that, because of the extent of this injury I've had to take the advice of the physio and commence further treatment immediately,' Christie said.

'I hope to return to Stawell in future years to finish what I started this year,' he said. Local sprinter and favourite Rod Matthews, starting off with a 9.5 metre handicap, clocked 11.91 seconds to win the AS\$1,000 (\$19,500) first prize in the 120-metre race.

Payton leads Sonics past Rockets

SEATTLE (R) — Gary Payton had 30 points, eight rebounds, seven assists and four steals but it was his backup, John Crotty, who sparked the Seattle SuperSonics to a 101-84 victory over the Houston Rockets on Sunday.

Payton had played every second of the game until he took a breather early in the fourth quarter.

The perennial all-star was replaced by Crotty, a seven-year veteran signed by Seattle after he was cut by Portland last month. The journeyman responded by matching his career high with 19 points. He scored 14 in the fourth quarter, including 10 in the first 4 1/2 minutes, as Seattle took control.

'It was a good stretch run for me,' Crotty said. 'You know it's tough when you come in with experienced guys but everybody has been great and really supportive.' Crotty made 8-of-10 shots, many of them driving layups through Houston's interior defence.

'He's a good player,' said Sonics coach Paul Westphal.

'We've been seeing that when we've had practice. He knows how to handle himself so he just needs a chance.' Detlef Schrempf had 16 points, 10 rebounds and six assists for Seattle, which shot 10-of-19 from 3-point range. The Sonics snapped a three-game losing streak that had dropped them under .500 for the first time since the 1991-92 season.

Hakeem Olajuwon scored 18 points and Charles Barkley grabbed 19 rebounds for Houston, which shot only 5-of-27 from behind the arc. The Rockets have lost two in a row following a nine-game winning streak and completed a 3-2 road trip.

Payton finished 12-of-27 from the field.

'Gary is the best point guard in the world,' Barkley said.

'He's a great player and he just dominated the first half. Give them credit. They played well and we played terribly today.'

In Toronto, the Raptors recorded a team-record sixth consecutive win and their ninth straight at the Air Canada Centre, taking advantage of the injured Allen Iverson's absence to defeat the Philadelphia 76ers 97-82.

The Raptors (18-14) have won 12 of their last 14 and are four games over .500 for the first time in team history. If the season ended now, they would make the playoffs for the first time as the seventh seed in the Eastern Conference. They are one-half game ahead of New York.

Toronto's nine-game winning streak in the new arena is the best home run in club history. The Raptors are 11-2 overall at the venue.

In Boston, one day after tying an NBA record with 11 steals, Kendall Gill totalled seven with 19 points and five assists as the last-place New Jersey Nets pulled away for a 91-79 wire-to-wire victory over the reeling Celtics.

Keith Van Horn scored 25 points and Stephen Marbury added 20 and eight assists for the Nets, who have won a season-high three in a row after a 5-34 start.

In Atlanta, Grant Long's 15-footer with 2.6 seconds to play gave the Hawks an 85-83 victory over the Charlotte Hornets, who have lost four straight games.

Alan Henderson scored 18 points and Tyrone Corbin 15 off the bench for Atlanta, which has won two in a row without leading scorer Steve Smith (sprained left knee).

In Cleveland, Wesley Person scored 20 points, making 4-of-7 3-pointers, and Andrew Delecroq matched a career high with 17 points as the Cavaliers ended the Milwaukee Bucks' four-game winning streak with a 98-74 victory.

Cleveland star Shawn Kemp was dazed after taking an accidental elbow above the left eye from Milwaukee forward Glenn Robinson 70 seconds into the game. He had to be wheeled off the court. After receiving eight stitches he returned to spark a big second quarter with 10 points.

In Chicago, Toni Kukoc blocked Shareef Abdur-Rahim's jumper at the buzzer as the Bulls held on for an 88-87 victory over the Vancouver Grizzlies.

Mark Bryant scored eight of his season-high 25 points in the final four minutes for Chicago, while Brent Barry added 21.

Abdur-Rahim had 26 to pace the Grizzlies.

At Indiana, Rik Smits scored 22 points to lead a balanced attack and the Pacers led for all but the first three minutes and pulled away for a 108-95 victory over the New York Knicks.

In Washington, Alonzo Mourning recorded 24 points and 17 rebounds and Tim Hardaway collected 20 points and eight assists as the Miami Heat snapped their four-game losing skid with a 90-79 victory over the Wizards.

In Denver, Chauncey Billups banked in a running shot in the lane with 3.9 seconds remaining, giving the Nuggets an 82-80 triumph over the league-worst Los Angeles Clippers (3-29).

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LOCAL SPORTS SCENE



Mamsar receives Arab Paralympics officials

AMMAN — Minister of Youth and Sports Mohammad Kheir Mamsar on Monday received Vice-President of the Arab Paralympics Federation Hassan Ali for talks on the preparations for the First Arab Paralympics, which will be hosted by Jordan Sept. 9-20. During the meeting, attended by Federation Secretary General and Financial Manager Hassan Sweidi, Ali said the federation decided to name the Games after the late King Hussein. Mamsar, who thanked the federation for the gesture, said he will visit a number of Arab countries and will discuss means to secure support and increase participation in the event. At the end of the meeting, Ali awarded a commemorative shield to Mamsar. HRH Prince Firas Ben Ra'd was named as director of the Paralympics in which 10 countries have announced their participation: Bahrain, Tunisia, Sudan, Palestine, Qatar, Kuwait, Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen and Jordan. The events on schedule are basketball, weightlifting, athletics, table tennis for the physically handicapped, athletics and target ball for the blind, athletics for the mentally handicapped and football for the hearing impaired.



Zaid Dahabra, at 12 the youngest Jordanian to achieve the PADI Open Water Diver Licence, in Aqaba where he reached a depth of 23 metres during one of his last dives

Look out for Japan, Heyns warns

HONG KONG (AFP) — Watch Japan! That was the message from South Africa's double Olympic breaststroke champion Penny Heyns after Japanese women dominated in the World Short Course Championships here.

Heyns, the gold medalist in the 100m and 200m breaststroke in the 1996 Atlanta Games, was forced to play second fiddle to rising Japanese star Masami Tanaka in Hong Kong.

Tanaka powered to a clean sweep in the breaststroke events winning gold in the 50m, 100m and 200m, before helping Japan's 4x100m medley relay squad to gold and a new world record on Sunday night.

Tanaka also set a new world best in the 200m event, to add further lustre to a glittering championships for the Japanese who finished second in the medal standings with six golds.

The medal haul came as no surprise to Heyns. "I've been at meets before and seen their coaches videotaping other swimmers to get information about technique and training," said Heyns. "I'm sure they've looked at swimmers like myself and learnt from it. You've got to give credit to them because they've done their homework and it has paid off here," the South African star said.

Heyns cautioned against touting the Japanese as a world power and said they had yet to prove themselves in a long-course 50-metre meet.

"They've always been there or thereabouts at the world championships and Olympics, getting into the finals but not challenging consistently for the medals."

"That will be the next big test. They've done well here in short course but we won't really know how good they are until they do well in a long course meet," she said.

"Having said that, I think it would be unwise for the rest of the world to assume that they won't be equally as good in long course competition. I will certainly be keeping an eye on them in the future," she added.

Heyns paid tribute to the performance of Tanaka in Hong Kong, who beat her in three finals.

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9th Pan-Arab Games

Prince Faisal satisfied with preparations, hopes all Arab countries will attend

By Aleen Bannayan

AMMAN — HRH Prince Faisal, the Regent, Monday expressed his satisfaction with preparations for the upcoming 9th Pan-Arab Games and said he expected an overall successful event that would bring together all Arab countries.

Prince Faisal, who heads the Higher Organising Committee (HOC), made his comments while visiting the Games headquarters and inspecting the venues under construction as the Kingdom prepares to host over 4,000 athletes and officials in the last Arab Games of the century.

The Prince expressed hope that all Arab countries would take part in the Aug. 15-31 event, renamed Al Hussein Tournament in memory of King Hussein who passed away on Feb. 7 after a long battle with cancer.

The Regent said all sports federations and athletes must have technical and financial support to enable them to achieve advanced standings at the Games for which 18 countries have so far confirmed participation.

"Work and preparations are going ahead as planned. Now it is up to our officials and athletes to do their part in order to attain the best results," Prince Faisal said.

The HOC had earlier announced that Jordanian medal winners would receive prizes and rewards that have never been offered before.

Prince Faisal said he had conveyed through the

Jordanian delegation accompanying His Majesty King Abdullah on his current visit to Saudi Arabia, Jordan's appreciation for the support of Prince Faisal Ben Fahd, president of the Arab Sports Federation in making the 9th Pan-Arab Games a success and worthy of carrying the name of King Hussein.

During his tour, Prince Faisal was briefed on the construction of various venues including the JD4 million multi-purpose indoor stadium with a 7,000-seat capacity, the Olympic-size swimming pool, and maintenance work on the track and field stadium at Al Hussein Youth City.

Amman Mayor Nidal Hadid said construction was on schedule and expected to be completed in June.

During his policy statement to Parliament Saturday, Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh underlined the government's resolve to upgrade sports in the Kingdom in general and support the Al Hussein Tournament in particular.

The premier noted that the success of the 9th Pan-Arab Games would not only reflect Jordan's achievements on the one hand but be a tribute to the late King Hussein.

Meanwhile, Egypt has announced that it will put Egyptian help and expertise at the disposal of Jordanian officials preparing the mega-event.

The Egyptian officials announced their country's support during recent talks in Cairo where Minister of Sports and Youth



Mohammad Kheir Mamsar met Egyptian officials and briefed them on Jordan's preparations for hosting the event.

Mamsar said Jordan was seeking to host all Arab countries and would spare no effort to ensure that all 22 Arab flags will be raised in Amman.

"Countries who might have certain difficulties like Mauritania, the Comoros and Djibouti will hopefully take part and send token delegations," Mamsar added.

For the first time, 27 events will be on schedule after scrapping polo and adding yachting. The Games will also be followed by the first Arab Paralympics in which 10 countries have announced their participation: Bahrain, Tunisia, Sudan, Palestine, Qatar, Kuwait, Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen and Jordan.

Jordanian officials concur that the two pressing issues on the agenda of Al Hussein Tournament now were the competitive level of the Kingdom's teams and acquiring equipment to upgrade facilities with elec-

tronic timing machines and other requirements since apart from gymnastics, no equipment has been ordered from abroad yet.

Mamsar this week set April 25 as the final day for submitting tenders to buy equipment for the Games.

Jordan Olympic Committee (JOC) officials have expressed concern that a host of administrative and organisational issues seem to have overshadowed the lax attitude of some federations overseeing the training of athletes — a key priority as host country.

The last regional event Jordan took part in was the 13th Asian Games in Bangkok in December, where Jordan only managed five medals, four by the taekwondo team. The rest of the athletes failed to even match their own national records.

The 8th Pan-Arab Games in Beirut witnessed the best Jordanian showing since the Pan-Arab Games were launched. Competing in 14 of the 20 events, Jordan finished 5th overall among 19 competing countries, taking

a total of 40 medals, including 10 gold, 8 silver and 22 bronze medals.

Jordan's athletes gained more gold medals in Beirut than in all the past 7 Pan-Arab Games together in which they gained a total of 49 medals, including 7 gold, 16 silver, 26 bronze.

Nineteen countries are confirmed for the Amman Games: They are in addition to the host, Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Kuwait, Qatar, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, Sudan, Palestine, Oman and Lebanon, Somalia, Bahrain, and the UAE.

The only Arab countries still not confirmed are Mauritania, Djibouti and the Comoros Islands.

The schedule will include 27 of 62 Olympic events (compared to 19 events in 20 sports at the 1997 Beirut Games).

Rehearsals for the opening programme have started and involve over 7,000 students from various schools. Final rehearsals will be held at Amman International Stadium in July.

A French expert who was in charge of opening and closing ceremonies during the 1998 World Cup has been contracted to provide expertise at a cost of JD250,000.

After Beirut hosted the 1997 Games the decision to move the Games back to 1999 instead of 2001 made Jordan's task more difficult and it has had to bear a heavy financial burden because the Kingdom has had to prepare the Games in less than 20 months.

So far, there has been no direct aid to help the Kingdom cover the estimated cost of around \$30 million of which the government has paid \$10 million and the JOC has provided \$4 million.

One of the major obstacles facing the Games was solved last month when UAE TV announced that it would lend Jordan Television the necessary equipment to cover the event after it was estimated that JTV needed JD6 million to acquire its own equipment.

Around JD3.5 million was expected in revenue (including \$1.5 million from TV coverage) and the Council of Arab Sports Ministers, which has so far granted \$500,000 in sponsorship, has promised to get additional funding from the Arab League and Gulf Cooperation Council.

Based on the promotion and marketing rights agreement with the Saudi firm RAF, Jordan will receive \$1.5 million in addition to 70 per cent of any additional income.

Additional sponsorship for Jordan's bid was secured by exempting Jordan from the 50 per cent Arab Sports Federation margin of profit on promotion and television coverage amounting to \$750,000.

Lebanon, which hosted the 8th Pan-Arab Games last summer, received \$28 million from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to help in construction of sports facilities destroyed during the civil war.

Ultra-cool Courier sinks battling British

BIRMINGHAM (AFP) — Jim Courier kept his cool amid pandemonium in the National Indoor Arena on Sunday to win a marathon five-setter against Greg Rusedski and give the United States a dramatic 3-2 victory over Britain in their Davis Cup World Group first round match.

The Americans will now travel to Australia in the quarterfinals after Courier thwarted a valiant fightback by Britain who had trailed 2-0 after the opening two singles.

The 28-year-old former World No. 1 rolled back the years in his 6-4, 6-7 (3/7), 6-3, 1-6, 8-6 victory over a pumped up Rusedski who was roared on by a deafeningly partisan 9,400 crowd.

The Canadian-born Brit finally crumbled when, serving to save the match for the third time at 6-7 in the decider, he netted a volley to lose serve to love after three hours and 47 minutes.

Courier, who has never been on a losing American Davis Cup team, insisted he had remained calm despite the gut-twisting tension.

"I can't remember the last time I've had such a peaceful feeling in my body," said the red-haired American, now ranked a lowly 54 in the world.

"Honestly you might think it's funny but I felt like I was in a row boat in the middle of the ocean and the fans were the oceans trying to hit me with the waves but I was just calm there. It was a really

easy feeling."

Earlier Tim Henman beat Todd Martin 4-6, 7-5, 6-3, 7-6 (7/4) to level a tie in which Britain had looked down and out after losing the first two rubbers.

Only once in 205 previous Davis Cup ties, 69 years ago, had Britain recovered from 2-0 down to win and they have not beaten the United States since 1935.

Rusedski, the World No. 11, made the worst possible start when he missed a simple smash to lose serve in the opening game and it cost him the set as Courier bludgeoned a series of forehands onto the lines to take it 6-4.

The big-serving Briton improved his serving in the second, slowing down his rhythm to the delight of the crowd and Courier's clear irritation.

Rusedski squandered four set points before levelling the match in the tiebreak as Courier netted a forehand.

The American immediately improved his serving accuracy and his whole game moved up a gear as a result. Rusedski gifted him a break for 3-1 in the third set

with a double fault and Courier raced away with it to move the United States to within a set of the quarterfinals.

Courier, winner of four Grand Slams, momentarily relaxed and Rusedski pounced to earn his first break of the match for a 2-0 lead in the fourth.

The home favourite then walloped a backhand pass cross court to break again for 4-0 and served out the set 6-1 as the match lurched back in Britain's favour.

Courier pointed to his heart after withstanding fierce pressure from his opponent on serve at 2-2 as both players dug deep into their mental and physical reserves.

Rusedski held serve with a miraculous backhand volley at 3-4 but neither player would buckle. At 6-6, amazingly, Courier served his first double fault of the match but still held.

At 6-7 Courier's swatted returns finally took their toll on the Briton as he three times failed to clear the net to spark jubilant celebrations among the Americans.

"You won't see any better

ties than that," said Courier. "When I was 5-0 down in the fourth I had to hold serve so I would serve first in the fifth and that definitely helped."

American captain Tom Gullikson, who had been deprived of the services of World No. 1 Pete Sampras, Andre Agassi and Michael Chang for the tie, was generous in his praise of a fighting British effort.

"These guys like to put a few more grey hairs on my head than my daughters do," he said.

"But it was a real tribute to Great Britain, they played great tennis and are great competitors. This should have been a semi or a final, that was the calibre of the tennis."



Jim Courier of the U.S. (L) is hugged by team captain Tom Gullikson after beating Greg Rusedski of Britain in the final match of the Davis Cup at the National Indoor Arena in Birmingham (AFP photo)

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Arafat arrives in Moscow for talks on statehood

Agencies

PALESTINIAN PRESIDENT Yasser Arafat arrived in Moscow on Monday, where he was expected to discuss the possibility of unilaterally declaring Palestinian independence next month.

Arafat is scheduled to hold talks with Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov upon his arrival and also plans to meet President Boris Yeltsin and Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov.

Russian diplomats said that the talks will focus on Middle East peace, and whether Arafat plans to declare a Palestinian state on May 4, when an interim agreement with Israel expires.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has threatened to annex parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip if Arafat declares a Palestinian state.

Russian officials apparently plan to tell the Palestinian president to put off the move and continue consultations with Israel.

The Palestinians should "put off the proclamation of the state so as to give a new chance for talks," Ivanov was quoted as saying by the Itar-Tass news agency.

Russia is officially a co-sponsor of the peace process, which was launched by a conference in Madrid, Spain, in 1991. But the United States has played a far greater role.

Earlier Monday, Turkey expressed staunch support for the Palestinian cause on Monday, but avoided any open backing of Arafat's idea of an independent state of Palestine.

Turkey is one of the few countries to have already recognised the existence of a Palestinian state and refers to Arafat as its president.

Arafat's campaign for support includes visits to Russia, India, China, Japan and possibly Malaysia.

Arafat held talks with Turkish President Suleyman Demirel in Ankara in the first stop of a week-long tour of European capitals for consultations on his plan.

In a news conference following their talks, both leaders steered away from the issue.

Demirel reiterated Turkey's "unwavering support for the Palestinian cause," and called on all parties not to "miss the golden opportunity of the peace process."

Demirel said Turkey did not share Israel's policies in Jerusalem and the West Bank.

Arafat lamented that the "peace process is in all aspects frozen."

Turkey enjoys close ties with both the Palestinians and Israel.



SURFING AUSTRALIA: Hawaiian Shane Dorian surfs during the 1999 Rip Curl Pro at Bells Beach, Victoria, in southeastern Australia on Monday, winning his first ever Association of Surfing Professionals (ASP) World Championship Tour event title. In an all-Hawaii final, Dorian beat Sunny Garcia to move into second position on the ASP World Tour rankings. Dorian pocketed \$15,000 (Reuters photo)

Warning of flying urine at football matches

LAGOS (R) — Spectators at the World Youth championship have been told to beware of flying urine at matches. The Sports Vanguard newspaper said youths had filled plastic bags with urine at Saturday's opening game between Nigeria and Costa Rica and then hurled them at unsuspecting supporters. "When next you are coming to the stadium endeavour to come with your umbrella," it suggested. "A lady got the baptism of urine and it was not funny."

Headmaster shears slack pupils

NEW DELHI (AFP) — A school headmaster in southern India gave his students severe reprimands for failing to do their homework, sparking the wrath of indignant parents. The Telegraph newspaper said on Monday. Headmaster Srinam Naidu from the city of Hyderabad said that although he did not believe in corporal punishment, he would further "discipline" the 15 errant students if they failed in their homework again. The children, all around nine years old and students of grade three, told police that the punishment was so severe that they sported bald patches and drew jeers from unaffected classmates. Naidu in comments to reporters said: "I had only cut one or two kids from their hair. This is just to remind them that they should study hard."

Saudi wife sues Viagra distributor

RIYADH (AFP) — A Saudi woman is suing the distributor of the anti-impotence drug Viagra in the kingdom, claiming that the drug had caused her husband to want to marry a second woman. The Okaz daily said Monday. The woman complained to an Islamic court in northwestern Saudi Arabia that she had been her husband's only wife for 35 years and it was not until he started taking the blue pill that he wanted to marry a second woman. The woman demanded compensation from Viagra's distributor in Saudi Arabia and asked the judge to stop her husband taking the drug and block his moves to marry a younger woman.

Huge omelette for village Easter

BESSIERES (AFP) — Villagers Monday celebrated Easter in southwest France by baking into gargantuan omelettes, one of them concocted with 10,000 eggs, accompanied by loaves of bread 3.5 metres long. The giant omelette in this village northeast of Toulouse was cooked on a wood fire in a pan four metres in diameter and equipped with a handle made from a telephone pole. In another southwestern village, Haux, residents awoke at the crack of dawn to break 4,507 eggs for their biggest omelette yet in 21 years of practice. That omelette, a mere three metres in diameter, also included 25 litres of oil, three kilograms of salt and pepper, 30 kilograms of garlic and onion, 30 kilograms of bacon and 20 litres of milk.

Couple sues over cigarette smoke

SALT LAKE CITY (R) — A Utah couple fed up with a neighbour's smoking has filed a lawsuit seeking to bar him from lighting up at home, saying his smoke is making them miserable. Matthew and Amanda Parrish of Centerville, Utah, are suing Douglas MacFarlane, who lives downstairs in their condominium complex, and claim his smoke wafts into their living quarters, state court clerk Shelby Brown said. The lawsuit, which was filed in February in state court, is believed to be the first to challenge the right of people to smoke in their own homes, said a spokeswoman for attorney Michael Stout, who represents the Parrish couple.

Algerian candidates cry foul play; 22 soldiers killed

ALGIERS (R) — Four leading candidates in Algeria's April 15 presidential election accused authorities on Monday of trying to fix the result, as news emerged of a deadly new attack by Islamist rebels.

"Methods and electoral documents employed to falsify the previous [1997] legislative elections are resurfacing despite our repeated protests," the four said in a joint statement after a meeting on Sunday night.

"The administration... is dedicated to a specific candidate," they added, referring to former Foreign Minister Abdul Aziz

Bouteflika, widely seen as the candidate favoured by the army in the poll to succeed President Liamine Zeroual.

The statement was signed by former Prime Minister Mouloud Hamrouche, ex-Foreign Minister Ahmad Taleb Ibrahim, Abdullah Djabballah, head of the Islamist Movement for National Reform, and a representative for Socialist Forces Front (FFS) leader Hocine Ait Ahmad, who is in hospital after a heart attack.

The accusations were published as a newspaper reported an ambush by Islamist rebels of a military convoy near the army's main garrison town of

Blida, 50 km south of Algiers.

The French-language daily El Watan, Algeria's most informed newspaper on security matters, said the guerrillas sprayed the military convoy with machine-gun fire in the early hours of Sunday, killing 22 soldiers. If confirmed, this would be the rebels' deadliest attack this year.

Twelve rebels were killed in an ensuing clash and troops sent to the area after the ambush were besieging an unspecified number of guerrillas, El Watan added.

More than 500 people have been killed so far this year after Muslim rebels and the army

stepped up their attacks ahead of the election, ending a comparative lull since last summer.

The four candidates have repeatedly urged the army to stay out of politics.

Diplomats and politicians say the military establishment, which has dominated Algeria since independence from France in 1962, is actively supporting Bouteflika.

They reject what they say is an inflated figure for eligible voters, recently put by the interior ministry at 18.5 million, compared with 15 million in the 1997 election.

The four have asked President Zeroual and Prime

Minister Ismail Hamdani to clarify the number of eligible voters.

"We are wondering where these 3.5 million additional voters came from. If it is not to change the results, then what is the aim?" asked Ait Ahmad in a recent interview.

Hospital officials said Ait Ahmad was rushed to hospital on Saturday evening after he suffered a heart attack while campaigning near the capital.

"He is still under intensive care and we believe he will remain here for several days so as to prevent another heart attack," a senior hospital official told Reuters.

Iraqi opposition plan meeting in London

CAIRO (AP) — Under U.S. pressure to forge a united movement to remove President Saddam from power, Iraqi opposition leaders are planning a meeting in Britain on Tuesday, dissidents said on Monday.

But two of the main opposition groups said they would not attend the meeting in Windsor, England, indicating continued divisions among the opposition.

The meeting is the first since the Clinton administration last year named Frank Ricciardone to coordinate with the Iraqi opposition groups.

"We want to discuss the leadership of the movement, its organisation and its goals," Delshad Miran of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) told the Associated Press in a telephone interview from London.

The KDP's rival, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, and several smaller groups also were sending representatives to the discussions.

But the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq and the Iraqi Communist Party, said they did not think such meetings would be effective and turned down requests from Ricciardone to attend the meeting.

"We cannot see any possibility that such a meeting will help in our efforts to save our country from Saddam," said Hamid Bayati, the Supreme Council's representative in London.

"Our party is not ready to take part in such meetings... it is not the right way," Sobhi Jumaili of the Communist Party told the AP from London.

Dissidents said the Americans are trying to reinvent the Iraqi National Congress (INC), an umbrella group of Kurdish, Shiite and leftist groups formed in 1992 to topple Saddam.

The INC floundered under internal bickering, ideological and ethnic divisions and the conflicting interests of Iraq's neighbours — the countries that host the dissident groups.

President Bill Clinton has proclaimed that Saddam's ouster is a major U.S. goal. The U.S. Congress has allocated \$97 million in aid for Iraqi dissidents, and U.S. and British planes patrol the skies over the dissidents' strongholds in northern and southern Iraq.

Iraq has always scoffed at America's strategy, saying the Iraqi people supported their president.

Bomb attack in Turkey kills 2, wounds 20

DIYARBAKIR (AFP) — Two people died and 20 were injured in a suicide bomb attack Monday aimed at a provincial governor in southeastern Turkey, security officials here said.

The governor, Suleyman Kamci, of Bingol province, was unhurt in the attack.

The bomber, a man of around 20, was killed along with a teenage girl. None of the injured were in a critical condition.

Kamci told the NTV news channel he heard two explosions as he was entering his office after leaving his car.

"When I looked back, I saw the body of the terrorist ripped

to pieces just 50 centimetres away from my car," the governor said.

"The other fatality was a girl of 13 or 14," Kamci said.

"This is an attack against the state, and not against myself. This person is a traitor," he said, adding: "It was perpetrated by criminals seeking to divide the country."

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack.

Suicide bomb attacks are often used by the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK).

The group has vowed to intensify its armed campaign against Turkey since the capture of PKK leader Abdullah

Ocalan in February.

Since then Turkey, especially Istanbul, has been the target of a spate of bomb attacks that have killed more than a dozen and wounded several others.

The worst incident occurred in Istanbul on March 13, killing 13 people.

On March 5 an attack on the governor of Cankiri province caused three deaths and 10 injured, including the governor himself.

Monday's attack comes just two days after a 27-year-old PKK rebel was blown to pieces in Tunceli province, 130 kilometres west of Bingol, when bombs around his body exploded before the set time.

Peace group protests stamp honouring Hebron settlement

TEL AVIV (AP) — Peace activists on Monday asked Israelis not to buy a newly issued stamp commemorating Jewish settlement in the tense and divided West Bank city of Hebron.

Postal Authority spokeswoman Sigal Galil said the stamp is part of a commemorative series on biblical cities and had nothing to do with politics.

The 1.8 shekel (45 cent) stamp depicting a cluster of homes nestled in the hills of Hebron was issued in September at the suggestion of Tourism Minister Moshe Katzav, as part of a series also featuring the towns of Tzfat, Tiberias and Jerusalem.

Some 450 Jewish settlers live in Hebron, a town of 130,000 Palestinians. In the last few years, violence has

broken out frequently in Hebron between settlers and Palestinians and between Palestinians and the hundreds of Israeli troops stationed there to guard the settlers.

Hebron is holy to Muslims and Jews.

The Israeli peace group

Gush Shalom asked Israelis

not to buy the stamp, saying

it was right-wing propaganda

aimed at Israel's May 17

election.

"It's unthinkable that someone going to the post office to buy a stamp has to cooperate with the elections propaganda," said the group's spokesman, Adam Keller. "They're not exactly commemorating the Arabs in Hebron."

Galil said the stamp was a historical depiction of Hebron, commemorating a

continuous Jewish presence in the city, but did not feature the current Jewish settlement there. The picture on the stamp is taken from an 1870 painting of holy cities in Israel.

"We're treating Hebron for its archaeological and historical continuity," Galil said. "It has nothing to do with politics."

Prominent Kosovo Albanians describe Pristina deportations

By Armando Furlani
The Associated Press

BONN — Six prominent Albanian activists, including a newspaper editor reported murdered last week, resurfaced on Monday in Germany to describe terror and mass deportations that have emptied Kosovo's provincial capital of its Albanian population.

The men, appearing weary but wearing suit jackets despite their undignified expulsion from their homeland, spoke to reporters in Bonn, where they were flown on Monday by the German army from the Macedonian capital Skopje to tell their stories.

"After seven days, Pristina was empty," said Migjen Kelmendi, a popular Kosovo Albanian writer and singer, referring to the capital of Kosovo province. "The only people left are drunken Serb police officers."

They said the Serbs began systematic deportations 12 days ago

— the same time that NATO opened air strikes. Serb police and soldiers looted Albanian stores, confiscated their property and moved their own families into apartments emptied of ethnic Albanians.

The six witnesses, however, disputed that the NATO campaign caused the deportations.

"NATO did not set this off," said Blerim Shala, publisher of the weekly Kosovo Albanian newspaper "Zeri," who described the deportations as a "biblical tragedy." He offered little hope that the situation could easily be reversed, if at all.

"Albanians won't go back as long as Serb police are there, and as long as NATO isn't there," Shala said.

Also present was Baton Haxhuni, whom Western sources reported to be dead a week ago.

Haxhuni, the editor of Kosovo's largest Albanian daily "Koha Ditore," said he had been in hid-

ing. Police barred him from entering the newspaper office about 12 days ago, took his cash and told him he "should get out of there," he said.

Like most of the six activists, Haxhuni survived by moving house to house in Pristina, hiding to survive. He escaped by blending in with a group of people driving out of Pristina toward the Macedonian border in a 28-kilometre convoy of cars and vehicles, organised by Serb authorities.

The Serbs also gathered thousands of ethnic Albanians and forced them to board trains in the middle of the night headed for the Macedonian border, the six said.

Kelmendi, the writer and singer, was among 30,000 people who were ordered to a central square one afternoon. Hours passed without further instructions. About 1 a.m. the crowd was forced to the train station and into 15-20 cars.

In the confusion and darkness, families were separated, arguments broke out. Heavily armed Serb police surrounded the train, shooting periodically into the air. After hours on the train, travelling slowly without food, water or fresh air, they arrived at the border, he said.

Also at the press conference were Shkelzen Maliqi, an intellectual who wrote for Zeri and ran the Open Society Institute, a branch of the George Soros Foundation; Bukurije Gjonbalaj, a translator at peace talks in Ramouillet, France; and Gjergjina Tuhina, Radio Free Europe reporter.

The men were to be flown back to Skopje later on Monday. None said what they planned to do next.

"A peace is only possible through a NATO presence," Shala said, adding gravely: "Albanians and Serbs living together is no longer possible."